Metalsmith

Summer 1990
Volume 10 Number 3
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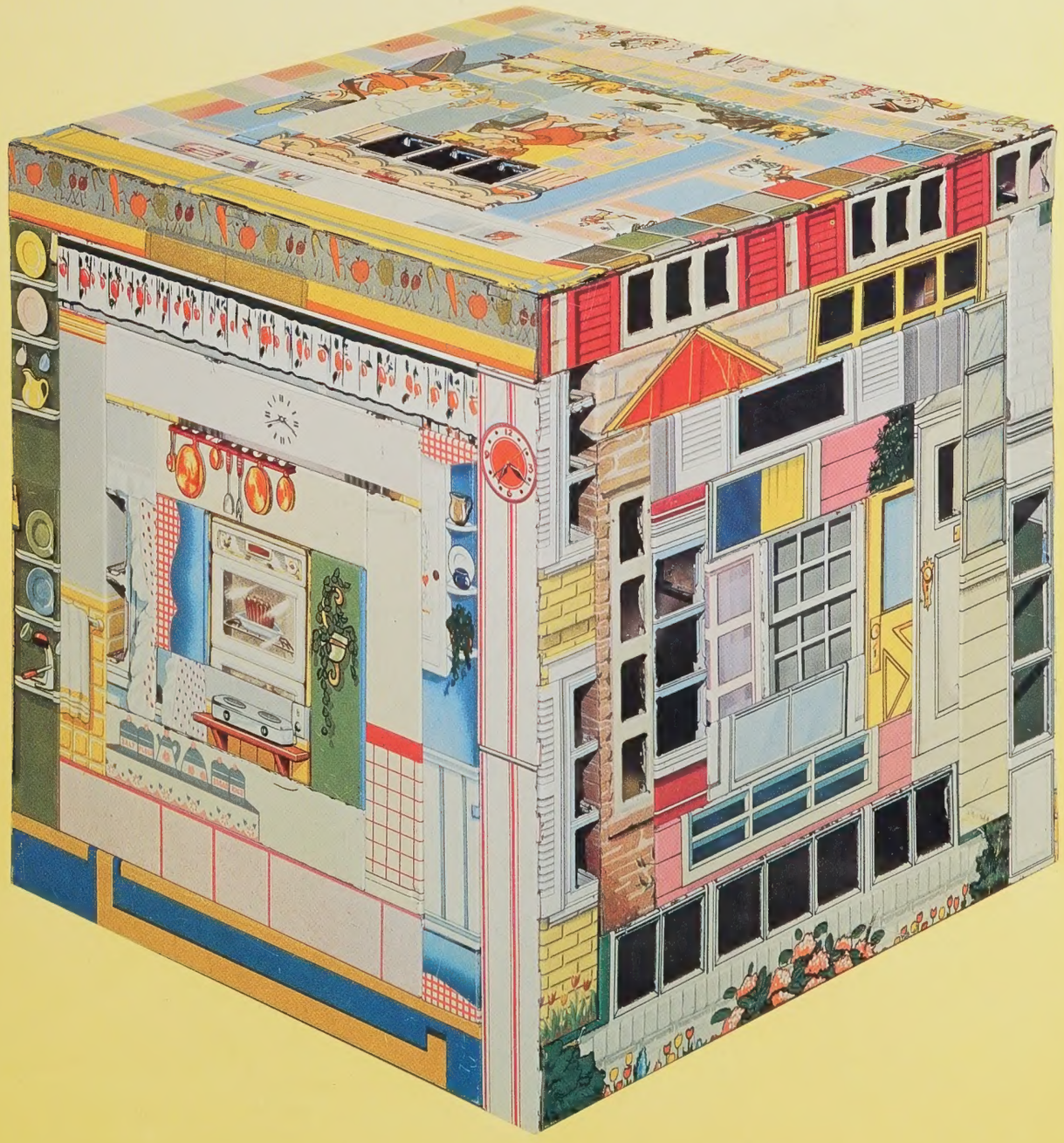

June Schwarcz, *Untitled Vessel*
copper, basse taille enamel
8 1/4 x 7"
Photo: Evan Sheppard
Courtesy: Franklin Parrasch Gallery, New York
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"AMERICAN DREAMS, AMERICAN EXTREMES"

Participating Artists:
Rebecca Batal, Elizabeth Garrison, Thomas Gentille, John Iversen, Betsy King, Stanley Lechtzin, Bruce Metcalf, Judy Onofrio, Pavel Opocensky, Kim Overstreet/Robin Kranitzky, Joyce Scott, Vaughn Stubbs, J. Fred Woell, Rhonda Zwillinger

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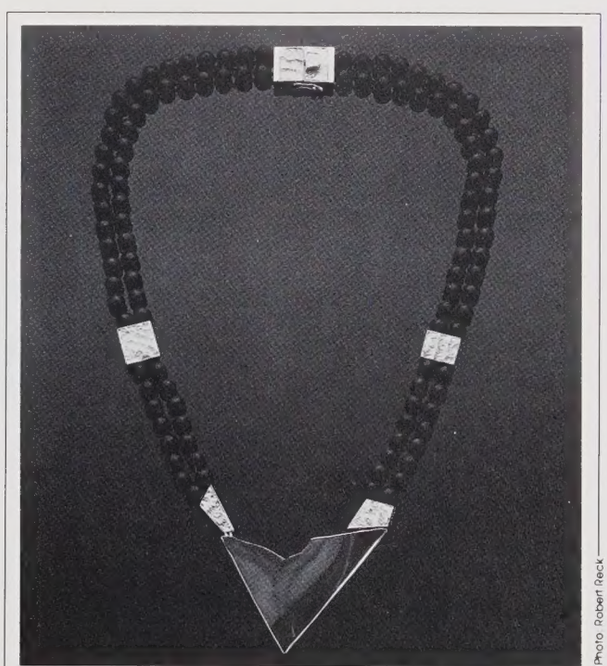

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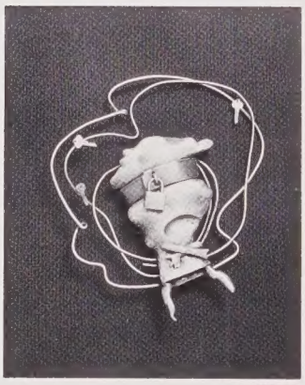

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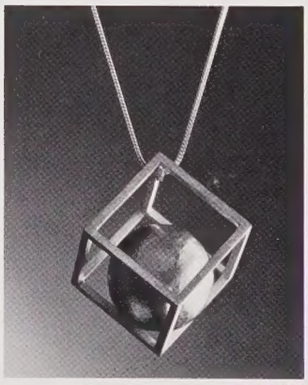

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Metalsmith

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Editorial

For a number of years, *Metalsmith* has been proud to receive grants from the National Endowment for the Arts that have allowed us to increase our payments to writers, to embark on new editorial projects, to show more work in color, in general, to conceive, edit and produce a better magazine. We feel we have been able to grow with the nurturing help and support of the peer-review-panel system used by the NEA. And while we realize that this system has been fraught with allegations of cronyism and favoritism, it is one that has retained a democratic attitude towards the distribution of grant money.

We are disturbed, therefore, by the recent intrusion of political pressure over the administration of the NEA, which has translated into control over what an artwork or a publication on art should and should not say. Since October, recipients of grants from the NEA have been required to agree to an accompanying clause that cautions against using the money for work that has "depictions of sado-masochism, homoeroticism, the sexual exploitation of children or individuals engaged in sex acts, and which, when taken as a whole, do not have serious literary, artistic, political or scientific merit." The restriction was imposed after some members of Congress, led by Senator Jesse Helms, Republican of North Carolina, objected to government financing of exhibitions with works by the photographers Robert Mapplethorpe and Andres Serrano. This language was modified by a strong lobbying group in Congress led by Representative Sidney Yates, a Chicago Democrat – Helms had proposed that Congress cut the NEA's visual arts program by $400,000, that it ban for five years all NEA grants to the two institutions that had sponsored the Mapplethorpe and Serrano exhibitions and that it prohibit future grants for art that was deemed "indecent or obscene." This amendment was the first legislated control of the content of an artwork funded by the NEA in its 25-year history. The 1965 law that created the NEA specifically prohibited political interference with the content of a subsidized artwork. (See *Art In America,* May 1990, p.49, and elsewhere, for more information on the Helms crusade and an excellent discussion about the issue of art and censorship.)

We applaud Representative Yates, who has been presiding over the hearings of the House subcommittee that oversees endowments for the arts and humanities for fiscal 1991, for his stand against including such language in grant agreements, the so-called "reauthorization without compromise." And we were pleased with President Bush's recently stated position against censorship at the NEA: "I don't know of anybody in the government that should be set up to censor what you write or what you paint or how you express yourselves."

While our grant for *Metalsmith* for the past fiscal year was received before the restrictive language was imposed, we are apprehensive about the implications of such language, should we be awarded a grant this year. The promissory letter that now accompanies all NEA grants requires the recipient to agree to abide by certain moral and esthetic rules dictated by politicians. While obscenity and pornography laws are already in place in this country, such supracompliance seems at best redundant and at worst a form of censorship that questions by what standards – liberal or conservative – such laws should be interpreted. Many writers have warned already of the potentially negative effects that accompany such bold restating of the law, including self-censorship and even silence. We cannot abide any incursions on the right to free speech or free expression that this bill would imply for our publication. At the end of April, Joseph Papp, director of the New York Shakespeare Festival, rejected a grant of $50,000 from the NEA because he felt he could not "in all good conscience accept any money from the NEA as long as the Helms-inspired amendment on obscenity is part of the agreement." We, also, feel we cannot publish a truly democratic, open and free magazine under these restrictions.

While waiting to hear about the funding of our grant application, the publisher of *Metalsmith*, the Society of North American Goldsmiths, has pledged to support the newly formed National Campaign for Freedom of Expression (NCFE), a coalition of artists and arts organizations from across the country, who are lobbying for artistic freedom and the public's right to experience art without government interference. (For more on this organization, see "Letters" on page 52 of this issue.) Campaign spokesperson Charlotte Murphy, Executive Director of the National Association of Artists' Organizations, warns that "The inclusion of restrictive language in the NEA's appropriations bill has already had a chilling effect on the arts community. There is no doubt Helms and his followers intend to impose further restrictions on artists who apply for government funding. Their goal is to censor artists, to muzzle their supporters and to punish politicians who vote or speak out in favor of freedom of expression."

Individual SNAG members and subscribers to *Metalsmith* can also play an advocacy role in shaping NEA policy. Letters to senators and congressmen are imperative now while the NEA fiscal 1991 appropriation is being considered, and, indeed, while the fate of the endowments for the arts as a whole is in question. A more difficult decision faces all of us: Have we received or are we waiting to hear from the NEA about a grant that we feel we sorely need to continue our artwork? If so, we should all think long and hard about the implications of agreeing to the Helms-inspired amendment before accepting. Every artist, as well as everyone who enjoys and appreciates art, has a responsibility to come to terms with the freedoms that we often take for granted and that are now being challenged.

The Editor, Editorial Advisory Board and Publisher of *Metalsmith*,
The Society of North American Goldsmiths Board of Directors

Metalsmith

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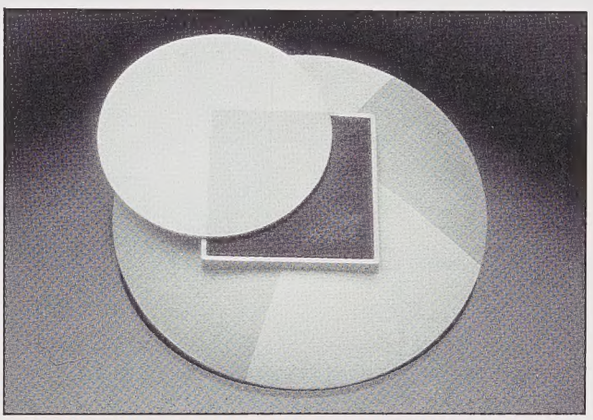

TONY PAPP, Brooch: sterling, nickel, slate

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What's Coming...

in the next issue

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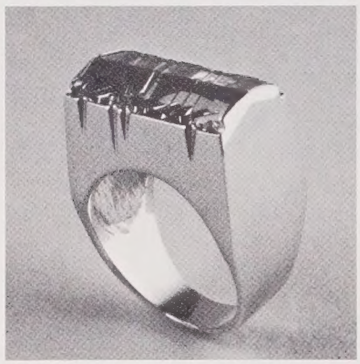
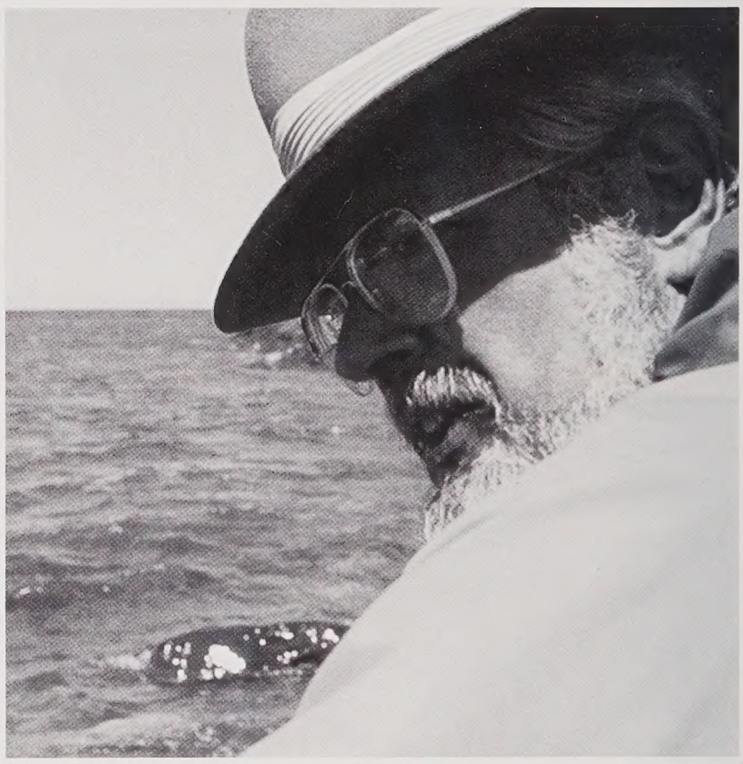
Piercing: Ornamentation as radical statement
SNAG Conference Report
Focus: Harlan Butt

Richard D. Austin 1936 – 1990





Richard D. Austin, Treasurer of the Society of North American Goldsmiths, died suddenly of heart failure at the 1990 annual conference in San Francisco. In his 54 years, he accomplished more than three ordinary people might aspire to.

Dick came to metalworking the same way as the majority of SNAG members – not through the direct door of a degree in art and metals but through the circuitous one framed by the love of making beautiful and finely crafted things. He expanded his father's interest in lapidary to include metals. While it is unclear after so many years exactly when he began making jewelry, it is known that one of his first successful pieces was a ring he made for his mother when he was 16.

He received a BS degree in chemical engineering from the University of Michigan in 1959, and then spent four years in the Air Force as a nuclear research officer with the 165th Technical Operations Squadron. In the years following, Dick worked with General Electric, The Ansul Company and A.O. Smith, primarily in new product development and management. This was followed by a period of time working for Latham, Tyler & Jensen, a design consulting firm, which ultimately led to his becoming a principal partner in the Delta Planning Group, a firm specializing in industrial marketing research.

He worked closely with Kerr Manufacturing as a consultant, helping to develop many of their investment materials and modeling equipment and materials we all use today. He also gave frequent seminars on model making and investment casting procedures around the country.

In 1988 he sold his partnership and turned his efforts to the full time creation of jewelry. It was his plan to leave Chicago within the year and set up a studio in Glen Arbor, Michigan.

Dick was also an excellent and prolific writer. In 1977, he co-authored *How to Design Jewelry* with Iva Geisinger. In 1978, he wrote *Model Making for Investment Casting*, a book that still sells several thousand copies a year. Dick is also credited with 84 technical articles for *Gems and Minerals* alone! He had served as technical editor of *Metalsmith* for the past several years.

Most of us, however, knew Dick from his involvement in SNAG since the early 1980s. Using his product development and marketing skills, he designed the first and only *Metalsmith* readership survey in 1985. The results of that survey told us much about ourselves as an organization, which was previously only a matter of speculation. He was elected treasurer in 1986 and began a long and difficult task of getting SNAG solidly into the financial black and operating with sound business procedures. He often fought hard for good business sense and reasonability during board meetings, but always while wearing his consultant cap and smiling expectantly. His work behind the scenes often went unnoticed, but that work made much of the difference in where SNAG is today financially. His annual presentations at the conference business meetings were a model of himself: clear, direct, good graphics and with a twinkle in his voice. His great sense of humor would often salvage any embarrassing lull in a meeting or conversation. He gave of himself untiringly and without complaint; he believed deeply in SNAG and its purpose.

He died among his friends, doing what he liked doing best. He will be dearly missed.

— Bob Mitchell

A memorial student scholarship fund has been established; any donations may be sent to: SNAG / Metalsmith, *Business Office, 5009 Londonderry Drive, Tampa, FL 33647.*

TONY PAPP

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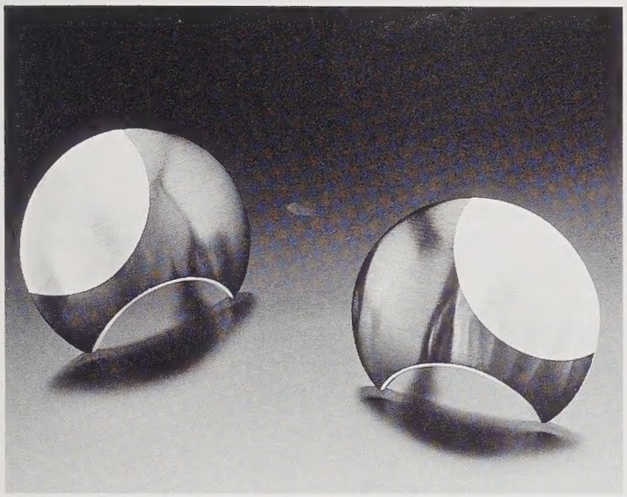

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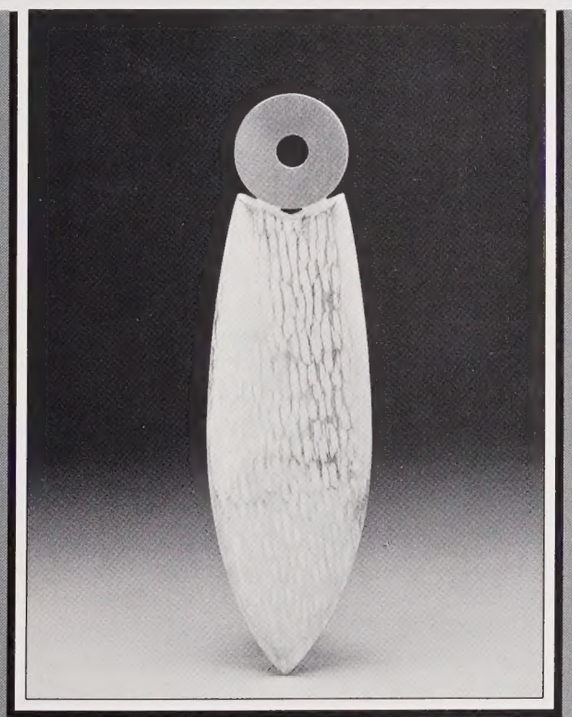

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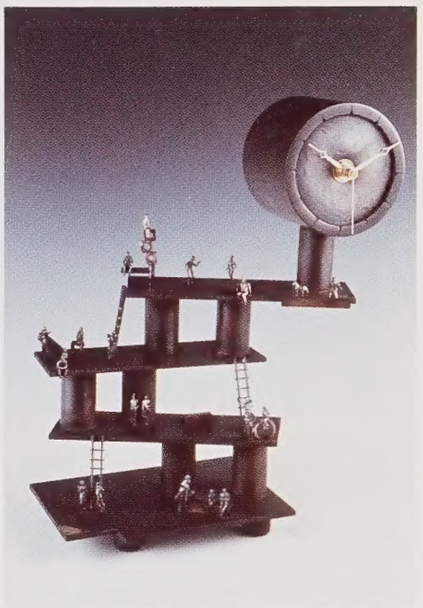

TIME FOR CHANGE
COPPER, STERLING SLIVER, BRASS, 11" x 7" x 3"

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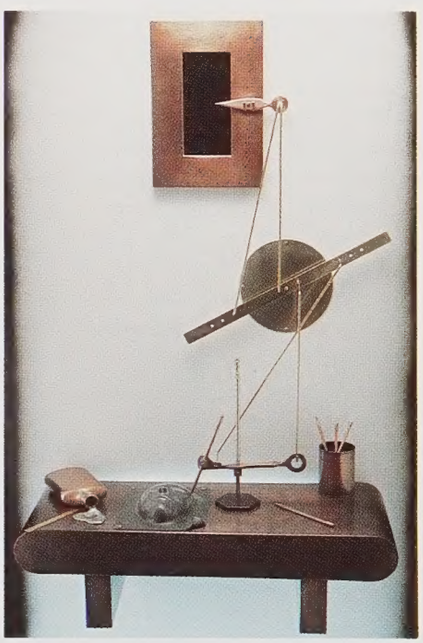

SELF PORTRAIT MACHINE
COPPER, BRASS, LEAD, PEWTER AND GLASS,
47" x 29" x 12"

East Meets West

by Michelle Dominique Leigh

My study of metalwork in Japan began with the words, "First you will make a ring." The teacher ceremoniously handed me a sheet of silver, a saw and a few files. I waited for an explanation but none was forthcoming. How was I to proceed? What about the technical stuff: how to use the saw, how to measure, how to turn flat into round, how to join? Where to begin, and where to stop? I pondered these questions as I gazed at the locked mysteries of silver, saw and files. This was unknown territory, and here I was without a guide. A kind of metalwork Outward Bound, Japanese-style.

Study any craft in Japan and you encounter the mysteries of Zen; both the way of teaching and what is actually taught are informed by Zen Buddhism and the more ancient Shinto that has fed into it. Study craft and you become an acolyte. Throw out your Western expectations, your need for texts, systems, logic, your insistence on the idea, the intellect, the ego, your drive for individual, privately owned creative expression. These things are useless here; they will only get in the way. If you can put these things aside (you can get them back later), what you will experience is a rather pleasant frustrating journey back to yourself.

You will learn that your true teachers are your tools and materials, and what you learn from them is personal. You will learn that asking too many verbal questions obscures direct learning. You will learn to seek your answers from the materials and the work process, if necessary, asking the same question hundreds of times; the answers you get are yours and yours alone. You will learn that it is the experience of the essential mystery of Things that is regarded with the highest awe, and not individual creativity. You will discover that your creative ideas are viewed suspiciously, as aberrations. Or, painfully, you will discover that the ideas you generate enter the public domain, to be taken over and used freely by any member of the group, students and teacher alike. You will learn that conceptual thinking is not appreciated; intellectual activity interferes with the ego-less "flow" experience. You will see that faithful repetition of known forms is preferred to searching experimentation. And, finally, what you gather as you move along this path may not follow any rational pattern nor fit any curriculum. You will find that it has its own organic continuity: it is the unique path of expertise that you have forged.

In the metalworking class, there is very little talk. The teacher never teaches. Occasional requests for guidance result in hands-on demonstrations, always in silence, with the barest minimum of purely technical information regarding weights, measurements, the use of tools. You learn what you need to learn as you need it. You are expected to perform the simplest actions countless times, until you find mastery, one thing at a time.

After a year of study, I thought back, trying to remember what the teacher had taught me about the soldering torch. I could remember only two moments of instruction: the first, when I was shown how to ignite and regulate the flame, and the second, when I was told that everything I needed to know I would gradually "know by feeling."

Often frustrated, I saw the teacher as a kind of jealous guardian of the secrets of metalwork; her function seemed to be more to veil than to reveal. I felt, for some time, that perhaps she really knew nothing, since she presented absurd vagueness concerning the most basic systems and formulas. How could something so scientific, so innately factual, be experienced as emotional, subjective, not-quite-knowing?

Gradually I understood: the use of words to explain, to catalog, to render logical, to reveal patterns, to clarify, to summarize, to teach is felt to be an inferior method of knowing. Words come between worker and process, removing understanding from its true source in the materials. It is, of course, accepted that all one learns is written down somewhere, but learning it by going to the text is shallow learning; it is havi*ng* the knowledge and not *being* the knowledge through doing.

I must confess: I cheated. Alone among the students, I consulted some texts on metalwork when feeling particularly mystified, greedily devouring them with a thoroughly Western gourmandise for the logical explanation, the juicy, astounding fact. Also, I was not content to sacrifice my creative self, neither by relinquishing all desire for self-expression nor by gracefully handing over my every inspiration to the group.

At the heart of Japanese culture, closely related to the strength and ordered harmony of the group, there is a missing element – creativity. This is missing, of course, because it is dangerous to the status quo and to the solidarity of the group. Creativity is individuality. Those who do manage to break through and exercise creativity are either flung to the nether-margins of society, where, ostracized, they remain unseen and unheard, or they are furiously imitated, swallowed whole by the group, separated from their ideas and rendered powerless. Of course, if one's pursuit of expertise in a craft is a spiritual undertaking, creativity need not be an issue. For in Zen, art is futile – being is all.

During the last class meeting of the year, before New Year's, the traditional time for cleansing, making good endings to prepare for pure beginnings, each member of the group chooses a group of tools to thoroughly, ritually clean, oil, polish and repair. While doing this, we think thoughts of gratitude, respect and reverence; we thank the tools – in my case, a group of ancient, stubbornly rusty files and beaten-up old mandrels – for their hard work during the past year. As we attentively and lovingly renew them, we remind them to work well with us in the year to come. Every object in the studio, every machine, every burner, every tool and, finally, every inch of the workspace itself is tended in this way, in a festive and deeply felt act of group devotion. Mr. Kokichi Mikimoto, founder of the Japanese pearl industry, held requiem services for the oysters that gave him his pearls, thanking them gratefully for their generosity and service. In Japanese life, such ceremonial devotion honoring tools and materials serves to strengthen the bonds between man and the world of objects, between man and nature. The objects themselves seem to be imbued with a kind of accrued vitality, like talismans or ritual devices.

While the Westerner who studies craft in Japan may reject some aspects of the experience – most often, the heavy burdens of tradition, group conformity, self-sacrifice – many elements are easily embraced. It is lovely to thank one's tools; it is bliss to work in "flow" and without intellect. It is good to feel that one's knowing, one's expertise, is all one's own, an inner journey of one's own making.

Having hewn your own path, established your relationship of right-mindedness with silver, saw and files, that ring you finally make is likely to have life of its own. And though you will want your Western baggage at the end of your Zen apprenticeship – your questions, your systems, your cause and effect, your intellect, your creative imagination – you will have internalized something deeply valuable with which to construct your own course. You will love and respect your tools as your teachers; you will know the metals and stones as divine natural "gods"; you will feel your workspace as sacred ritual space. You will know that the power you wield is not your possession, but the expression of a relationship between yourself, your tools and nature; you will rely on your intuitions and feelings as much as on your intellect; and you will know to work in flow. You will know that you are a participant with nature in the creation of your work, and that nature's gifts of spontaneity and accident emerge with exquisite unpredictability when control is most disciplined, elegant and sure.

Michelle Dominique Leigh is a freelance writer and illustrator presently living in Sendai, in northern Japan, where she is writing a book and studying metalwork with Setsuko Tanezawa at the Atelier Setsu.

AMERICAN WORK IN METAL

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▲ JEWELRY ●

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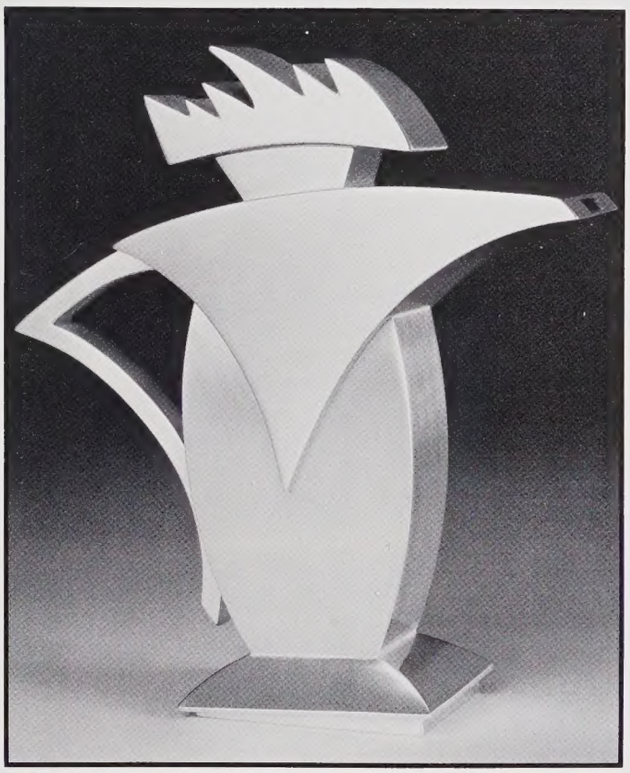
May 26 – September 10, 1990



"TEAPOT FITZGERALD" by NANCY SLAGLE. Sterling Silver.

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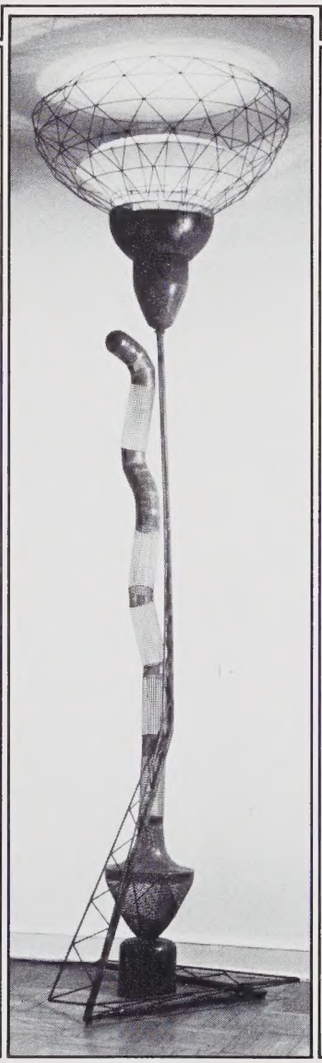

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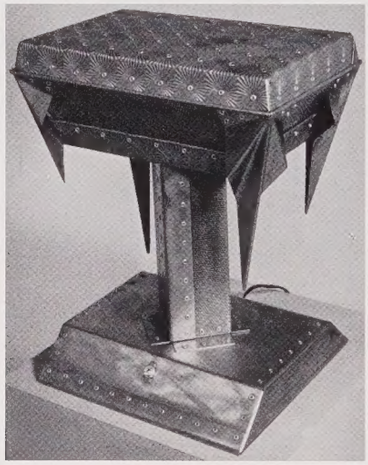
Art & Technics

by Tim McCreight



Dale Wedig, *Fudge Pan Camp Lamp*, steel, 18 x 12 x 8", 1988

Jonathan Bonner, *Alligator Candlesticks*, copper.
Photo: courtesy Nancy Margolis Gallery, Portland, ME

I suppose cooks get goosebumps when they walk through a farmers' market. Maybe bankers get clammy palms when they hear the thump of the presses at the national mint. I know for a fact that metalsmiths get glassy-eyed when they stroll the aisles of a well-stocked hardware store or used tool company. Admit it, you know the look. The rapid breathing, the twitch in the eye. The effect is especially rich when several smiths go into a store together. They shout out loud as they call each other over to see what they've found, and all the while they furtively clutch their private treasures out of the sight of their friends.

A good deal of the enthusiasm of metalworking today – and no small number of the exciting pieces as well – comes from the ability to import materials and techniques from other fields. There is a special kind if vision that can see vessels and findings among plumbing fixtures. And there is a wonderful directness that comes from a technical solution found in an unexpected quarter.

Examples of this kind of cross-pollination are so numerous that it is difficult to isolate a few. One example that comes to mind is the series of creature-shaped candlestick holders made of copper tubing by Jonathan Bonner. The whimsical personality of these gators with their crusty skins of green patina has something to do with their familiarity. You don't have to be a plumber to recognize the pipes that made up the animal. and yet the familiarity, far from making the work appear common, serves to underscore the transformation that has taken place. These pieces are not merely clever uses of materials (like owls made by gluing seashells together) but legitimate art objects. What makes these pieces so enjoyable is the delicate precision of scale, craftsmanship and function. You know, design. Technique in this case has been reduced to invisibility. Though the bending, sawing and soldering are in fact quite demanding, the illusion of easy construction allows the viewer to approach the work with a comfortable immediacy.

Another example of work that capitalizes on an industrial method of joinery is Dale Wedig's lamp. Here pop rivets are used for both structural and design reasons. The shade is made of a commercial baking pan and the body is of zinc-coated steel plate. The form was developed in paper and then cut out with tin snips and bent on a brake. Someone without a bending brake could get by with another of those common hardware store items, a C clamp. By clamping strips of wood or steel together on both the inside and outside of a form, it's possible to make a crisp bend.

The pop riveter does for the metal trades what the stapler does for the office. It consists of a gun-shaped tool that costs about $20. The "staples" in this case are hollow rivets, generally of aluminum or copper, that have been pre-formed with a head on one end and a finishing nail slid tightly into the core of the tube. The tool grabs onto this nail and pops it through the rivet, thereby flaring out the end.

Because the pop riveter makes a tube rivet, there is a passage through the middle. This opens several possibilities, such as threading on a decorative element, inlaying a wire of contrasting color or nonmetal material, or, perhaps, allowing light to show through. As formed, the pop rivet has a drab shape that is sometimes appropriate, but I can imagine cases where it could be embellished through stamping or engraving.

The 20th century has established that art has little to do with the inherent value of a material. We can acknowledge that the intent and vision of the artist are what give worth to a piece of art. Most everyone will admit that any material can serve as a vehicle for this vision. If course, it would be misguided to limit ourselves to common materials, just as it would be confining to permit only precious ones. The point, I think, is to seek a larger awareness. Such freedom from prejudice, concerning both materials and techniques, will open our eyes to the possibilities that surround us.

Tim McCreight is head of the metals department at Portland School of Art and a contributing editor to Metalsmith.

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The Closing of Doors

An Interview with Garth Clark

by Donald Friedlich and Judith Mitchell

In September of 1988, the CDK Galleries opened their doors. Partners Garth Clark, Mark Del Vecchio and Wayne Kuwada presented the work of 11 carefully selected American jewelers including Fred Woell, Lisa Gralnick, Robin Quigley, Jamie Bennett, Randy Long, Christina Smith, Linda Threadgill, Rachelle Thiewes, Bruce Metcalf, Donald Friedlich and Kiff Slemmons. Located in a separate room within Garth Clark's prestigious New York and Los Angeles ceramics galleries, CDK intended to do for jewelry what Clark had done for clay – elevate its status in the eyes of the curators, collectors and critics of the art world. In his formal offer to represent the jewelers, Clark wrote with confidence that CDK would be "an acknowledgment of jewelry as an art form."

Only eight months later, Clark's artists received another letter from him. "CDK," he wrote, "will close its doors." On a rainy February afternoon, Donald Friedlich met with Clark in his New York gallery to find out what went wrong.

How did you become interested in contemporary jewelry?

I will answer that in a moment but first I want to preface all of my remarks with a few points. First, most of the comments I will make will be generalizations about the field. They should not be construed as being specific to any of the artists that we exhibited unless specifically stated as such. I was honored to show their work and they all delivered exciting shows. Second, I am not an expert in art jewelry. I am an excited admirer and a collector. I feel uneasy about giving opinions and their only benefit might come from my distance to the field. Third, the problems we ran into with jewelry came from conflicts between the direction that we needed to go with ceramics and the different direction that jewelry was tugging us towards. All the other difficulties could be resolved but for this one, and, when we realized the incompatibility, we decided to pull out. This would not have been true of, say, a gallery dedicated to wearable art. Last, we have not abandoned the entire notion of working with jewelry. We have two possible jewelry exhibitions coming up in the future, but we are skeptical of our ability to be fully effective in this field.

Now to your question: I began by collecting historical jewelry. As a teenager I was attracted to Art Nouveau jewelry and, to some extent, Art Deco as well. When I was about 20, my ex-wife and I began to collect African jewelry – Benin lost wax bronze jewelry and Bushman beadwork. But then I got involved with ceramics and because of a limited budget, we stopped collecting jewelry. Still, I continued to notice and admire jewelry and was particularly impressed by the inventiveness that I was seeing in the United States. My interest was rekindled when I was invited to speak at the SNAG conference at the Cranbrook Academy of Art in 1987. I was fascinated by the Society and intrigued by the objects its members were making. I couldn't believe there wasn't a market for what I was seeing. At that point I had resumed collecting jewelry in a modest way. It seemed to make sense to do something with jewelry at the gallery. It appeared to be an activity that could run parallel with the ceramics.

As a result of your interest in jewelry over the years, peaking with your speech at the SNAG conference, you had formed an initial view of the jewelry field. Over the life of CDK, how did that view change?

The biggest problem with CDK was neither art nor money. We never expected to make money, at least not in the first few years. We knew what we were trying to do was going to be a long, slow road. Most of the work we were showing was very strong, very good. We had wonderful shows and they were installed well. The aesthetics were fine. The biggest problem I found was that there was basic incompatibility between what we were doing as a ceramics gallery and what we were doing in jewelry.

We had assumed that the ceramics and jewelry could share resources and be complementary. In fact, they were totally and absolutely separate. Ceramics is making inroads into the world of art and jewelry is not. Whether you want to call it decorative art or fine art, I really don't care, but with ceramics there is art world activity. The field made tremendous progress that makes clay a very exciting field to work in.

The jewelry was completely rejected by that world. You and I can theorize about the fact that jewelry is art. You and I can accept that it is art or, at least, the best of it is art. But to the rest of the world, jewelry's marketplace remains the fashion marketplace. That is a world we have no desire to enter.

You have decided that you aren't the one to change that. Do you see anybody else in the position to open some of those doors into the art world?

I think Helen Drutt is doing a great job. Now that I have worked in the field for a short while myself, my respect for her has grown even more.

Do you see any way that the jewelry field in general, or SNAG in particular, can help the art world accept jewelry?

It will be difficult. I felt that I could make little difference myself, which is one of the reasons that I didn't want to continue, even though, as we got closer to closing CDK, the business became more and more successful. It was clear that if we continued, we would probably do reasonably well financially. But it was tearing us apart. We had to have two complete psyches within the gallery to cope with the ceramics on the one hand and the jewelry on the other. That was the biggest problem. Furthermore, jewelry consumed a disproportionate amount of our time and resources, at the expense of the ceramic business.

Sort of a schizophrenic split within an individual?

Yes. There was this split which made us all feel very uneasy. Ceramics is in a very separate world. For some reason the fine arts community was always more sympathetic towards clay than towards any of the other craft media such as glass or fiber. That has given ceramics a head start.

Jewelry has had a different kind of history. For such a long time, jewelry has been considered a portable asset. When the time comes to flee, when revolutions erupt, when the kings are dethroned, you gather your jewels into your jewel box, tuck it under your arm and race away. Ceramics has had a much longer history of creating autonomous art. It can also be precious, but in a different way.

Do you think the intrinsic value of jewelry is an Achilles heel to its acceptance? In much of the work going on in Europe, and to some extent in the United States, people have rejected the use of precious materials. Do you think that rejection will help to open some of those closed doors?

I think it is very important in the long run, indeed, essential. In the short term, it will slow things down. For example, we have a couple who buy very avant garde art, such as expensive paintings that self-destruct, meaning that in about 20 years' time, the paintings might not exist. At the same time, the same collectors will only buy Cartier Art Deco jewelry. They reflect their intellectual tastes on the walls, not on their clothes. They don't want to present themselves to their friends and peers as a walking, self-destructing painting. They perceive their persons in a more conventional way and, as a result, prefer precious jewelry. In fact, we found there was active hostility from the art community towards the jewelry. At best, they were passive about it, but often they actively disliked it as being pretentious and trying to emulate art. I do not agree, but that was the attitude.

When you say art community, are you speaking of the press or curators, or collectors, or all three?

All three. You have to understand that we do not function as a craft gallery. We have some collectors who collect only craft, but primarily our collectors also collect mainstream paintings, videos, photography, sculpture, whatever. These are people who have a commitment to ideas, not to a material or a single discipline. They are not going to commit themselves to collecting metalwork or jewelry as a genre. Each individual piece of jewelry has to impress them as a work of art, or they won't buy it.

To further complicate things, people's response to jewelry is very emotional. After all, man first made jewelry from the bones of slain animals and wore these to intimidate, to show how powerful and dangerous he was. We do the same thing today, but now the power is reflected by the size of the gem, its rareness and by the weight of the gold. I think this is why people still prize very conservative and traditional jewelry. It is a very atavistic response.

In other words, people still prefer the 47th–Street view of jewelry, or perhaps the* Vogue *view of jewelry, as opposed to the small world of "art jewelry" that SNAG represents?

In our limited experience, people who consider themselves serious about jewelry think in terms of Fifth Avenue. People who want to play with jewelry go to Henri Bendel or some place of that nature. Many people who came into CDK enjoyed the jewelry. But when the piece they admired turned out to cost $2,000, they would say, "Well, I like it, but I can get something that will please me as much in costume jewelry for $50 to $200." They were happy to buy cheap, fun jewelry that would reflect another more informed side of their personalities. But if they were going to make a serious commitment to jewelry, it had to be what they considered serious jewelry – gems and precious metals.

But the jewelry you were showing was serious in terms of its content. Did that ever come into play?

Rarely, and that was the most infuriating thing I had to deal with. When we sell ceramics, the discussion is always the content. It's not whether it's big or small or whether it's a celadon glaze or not a celadon glaze. Why is this artist trying to do what he's doing? Why on earth is Adrian Saxe covering his pot with cubic zirconium, for instance? The whole discussion concerns the "why" of the piece.

The way in which the jewelry buyers would decide to buy work made me feel impotent. They would come in and pick up the jewelry, hold it to their bodies and, in that split second, the decision was made. If there was something they didn't like about the way the piece looked on them, it was over. You couldn't discuss it. You couldn't convert them to an interest in the art. If it didn't fit the kind of clothing they tended to wear, forget it. The discussion came to an absolute end. For us, the most interesting moment in selling ceramics is the moment when somebody looks at the work of art and says "no," because that's when we begin to try to turn it into "yes." Also, you find with art, the work you say no to most readily is, in the long term, often the work you eventually say yes to most enthusiastically. We just could not do that with jewelry, because even the so-called serious collectors (and there are not many of them in this country) were still, in a sense, buying art from a fashion perspective. They had a style or a look. They had a certain kind of clothing that they wore. And if that jewelry did not go with how they presented themselves, they rejected it.

But with the ceramics, don't you get people saying, this pot just won't work with my couch, or my living room is the wrong color for this vessel, just as you have people saying that this jewelry just won't show well on my print dresses?

No, we don't have that problem, and I think it's because we filter clients right from the beginning. We don't want to deal with clients who want to use art to make their couch look more stunning. For most collectors – at least for most of our collectors – it's not an issue. For instance, we have never dealt with the interior design world. We don't encourage them. We don't advertise to them. We steer clear of this market because we dislike dealing with that kind of fashion consideration. It's demeaning for the artist. It's demeaning to us. But with the jewelry, we found ourselves drawn into this kind of world, one that we had so carefully steered away from. With the jewelry, what I considered to be a very serious work of art was judged by whether or not it matched the buyer's eye color. To me, that is a very irrational way to buy art, but possibly a justifiable standard in wearable art.

There are those who view jewelry as site specific sculpture, with the individual wearing it as the site. Wouldn't that point of view legitimize the idea that the site – the individual – is of paramount concern?

That was the other problem. A lot of buyers lost confidence in the jewelry early on, because, for site specific art, the work all too often did not take the site into consideration. Most jewelers say they do, but when a piece actually has to fit on the body and deal with shoulders and breasts and bellies and movement, the attitude often seemed to be, "Your body is now going to have to fit my jewelry." You'd have to put it on just before you were going to an event, move very carefully, watch how your arms flew around, come straight home and take it off again. For instance, you can't wear a lot of the art jewelry in the winter simply because you can't put a coat over it.

Then there were other things I found difficult. People who had been in the field for years, who were top jewelers, couldn't do findings properly. We'd try to pin a piece onto a customer's lapel and the whole piece would come adrift. There were pieces designed to stretch right across the body from shoulder to shoulder, but if you moved your shoulders, the piece would snap because it was too brittle and didn't allow for movement. We had many wonderfully embarrassing moments with clients when pieces we were showing came apart and fled the site!

This was despite the fact that one of your primary prerequisites for selecting the jewelers you represented was that their work be functional and function well? Despite that limitation, you still found serious problems with how the pieces functioned when worn?

Yes. That caught us really by surprise. In many cases, of course, I made the error because I looked at the pieces from a male point of view. I don't wear necklaces or bracelets. So, I would select work that I thought looked functional and then Gretchen Adkins, our assistant director, would wear the pieces, and we would discover that despite their gorgeous appearance, they were absolute hell to live with. While CDK was open, I must have drawn blood 12 to 14 times, and wrecked three or four articles of clothing with jewelry that just tore into me one way or another. I felt very constrained with certain pieces of jewelry, knowing that, unless I changed by body language, I was going to hurt myself. Well, I don't want to change my body language for a piece of jewelry. I want a piece of jewelry that will accommodate my body language.

I suppose what we're talking about here is a schism between academic jewelry and production jewelry. I don't want to say that I disagree with academic jewelry, because there is always room for the jeweler who creates the theatrical piece, where the patron and the jeweler become collaborators in an act of theater. But those pieces are only for very special moments and can only be pulled off by special artists.

I like to wear jewelry but tend to wear it for celebrations and special occasions. Whenever I go out for a special dinner or opening, I have great fun picking out that special pin to wear. But on a day-to-day basis, I tend to wear a lot of Robin Quigley's work, and yours, as well, because I can live and work in it very easily. Your work worries me a little because I can chip it. Because I respect the piece, I don't want to damage it, and I'm tending to wear it again, more for special occasions. I think that truly theatrical jeweler is wonderful, what is his name, the German conceptualist...

Otto Künzli? Actually, he's Swiss and lives in Germany.

Yes. Künzli is just wonderful because he goes all the way. Much American art jewelry is a compromise. It is relatively conventional jewelry with conceptual

Continued on page 40

The Intimate World of Alexander Calder

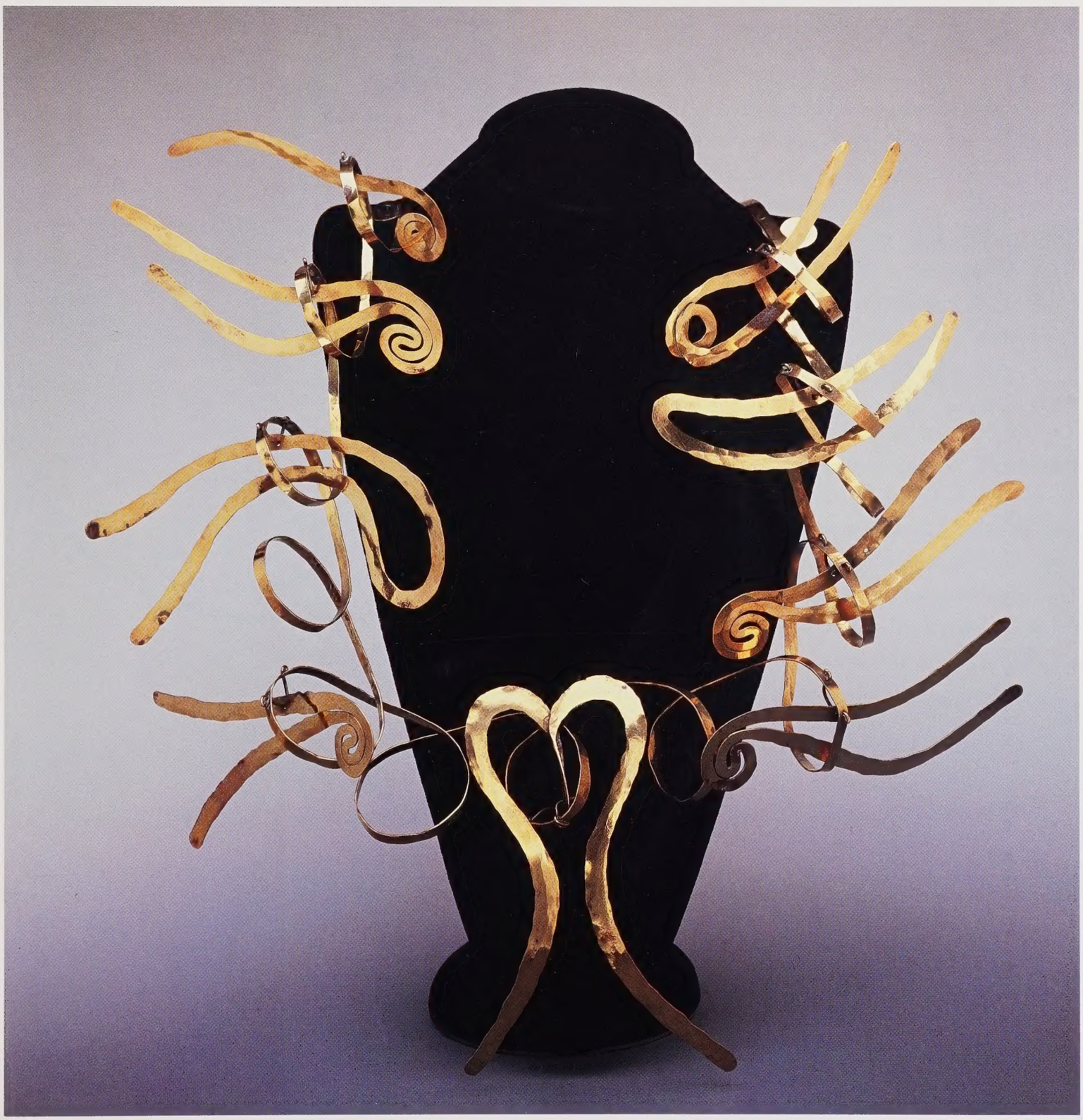
by Pavel Opocensky

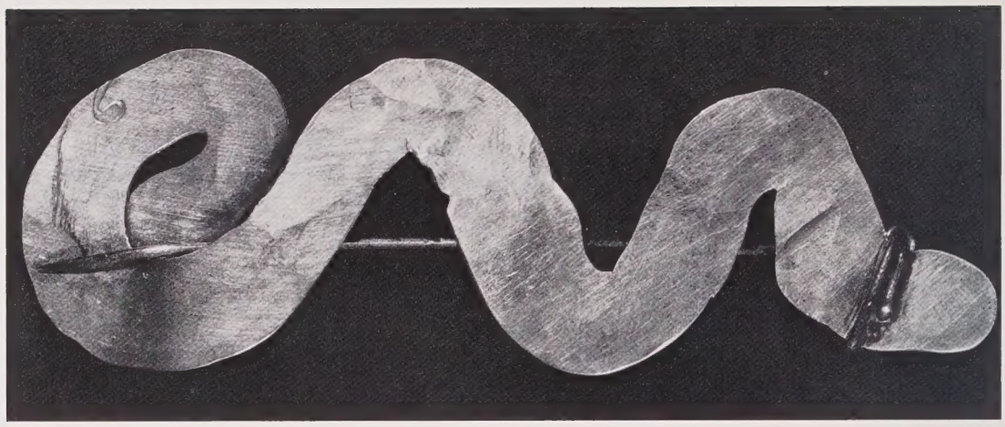
The real Alexander Calder is to be found in the intimate work – the toys, gadgets, jewelry – those delightful preoccupations of his that often get overshadowed by the big mobiles that hang in many public spaces. It's no wonder that walking through this show, you only have to watch the audience's reactions to realize how much life Calder puts into this work. With remarkable ease, he teases you, excites you, astonishes you, does with you whatever he wishes. Upon entering the show, I noticed two children chuckling over Calder's tin birds (his toys are truly irresistible); but then, there was even a greater commotion of laughter coming from a room where a film of Calder performing his circus was being shown. Suddenly, there were not only kids, but parents and grandparents having a good time, infected by Calder's antics.

Calder never lost his childhood. The reality of adulthood gave only more depth to his wit and craftmanship. Seeing the wire sculptures, I found myself again and again startled by his ability to take wire and without much struggle animate the simple profiles of people, animals, fish, etc. This is where Calder's genius dominates his craft. Anything is possible for him. Though the individual elements might be merely found objects with a former life and purpose, Calder transforms them. He sees beyond the objects's former identity, reshaping them to respond to human characteristics and moods with a sense of spatial animation that has no comparison in the arts. Movement is the key to much of Calder's work, not only in the physical movement of the mobiles, but also in the suggestion of movement in the rest of his work.

***Seagull*, wire, c. 1950**

Harps and Hearts necklace, brass, 42″, c. 1950
Collection: Mrs. Ella Freidus, New York. Photo: courtesy Mrs. Ella Freidus





***The Squiggle* pin, silver, 3 7/8 x 1 1/4"**
Photo: courtesy Perls Galleries, New York

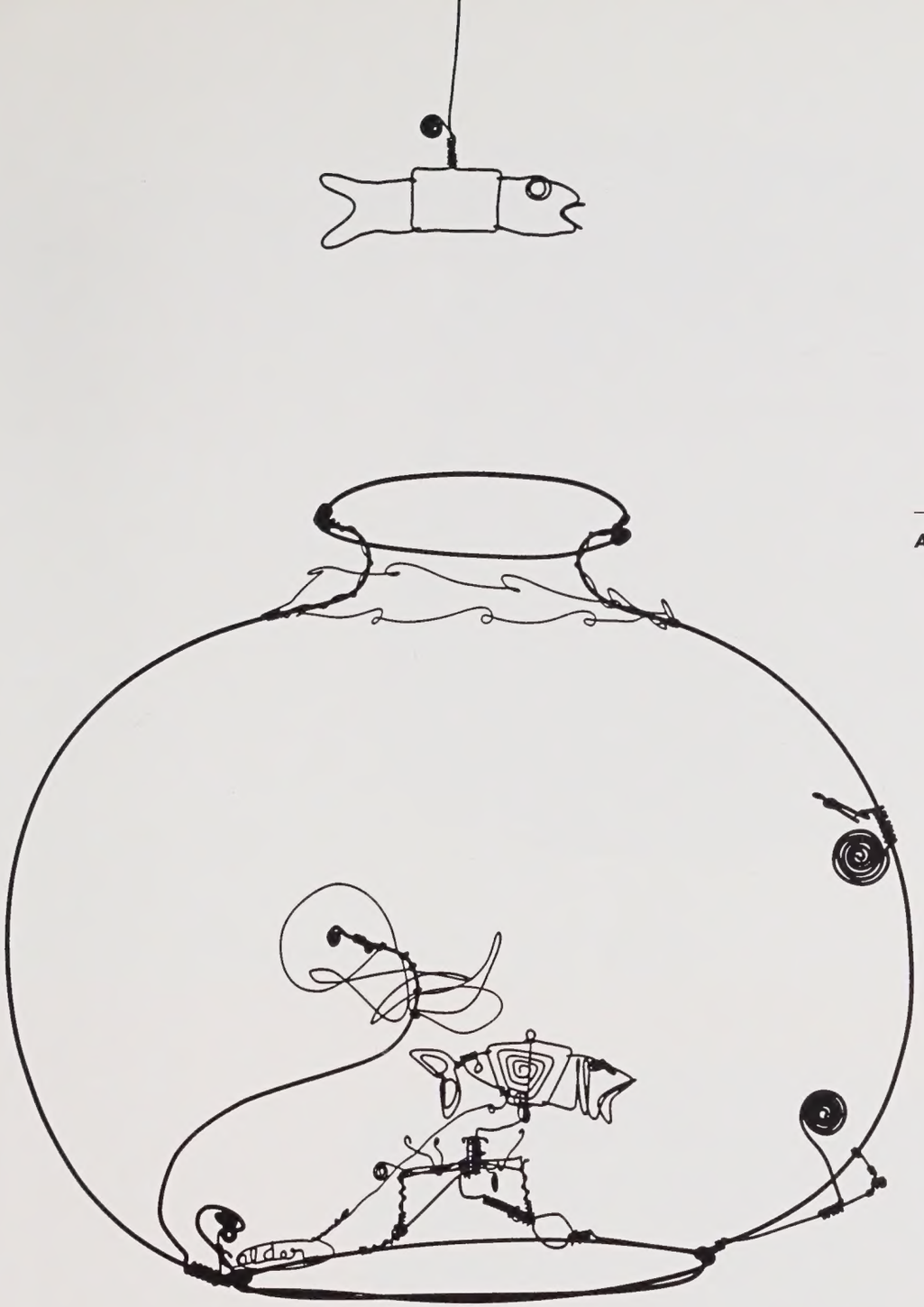
Especially in the jewelry, I find Calder's familiarity with metal and techniques a great surprise. The material is wire and his tools are the hammer and pliers – that's it for tech-nology. The results from this basic setup, however, are anything but simple. For example, I particularly like the *Running Fish* brooch from 1942. The way he hammered the silver wire, the sensitivity in shaping the fish, tells you something about control and an understanding of the medium. Then there are the thin legs running under the weight of the heavy fish shape. Only with Calder's wit and play on movement is it possible to bring about a harmonious art with very little technique. The same is true for the famous fish bowl from 1928. There is no flaw nor doubt in the handling of the wire line. Plants, fish, snail, outline of bowl and water level create an illusion of nearly subconscious depth. The artist's mind working to forge complexity, the piece never looks flat or confusing but constantly changing.

Even the utilitarian pieces, like *The Fork* from 1950, maintain a highly developed sense of form. The suggestions of hand and forearm in the shape express the connection between the object and its use. In a *Ring* from 1950, five, maybe ten, blows on a piece of brass tell you all about the conception of form. One of the best examples of Calder's ornaments is the royal *Harp Hearts* necklace from 1950, which displays his full range of features, like the unbroken line, movement and direct construction. Each time I see this masterpiece, I think of it being worn by someone immediately transformed into royalty.

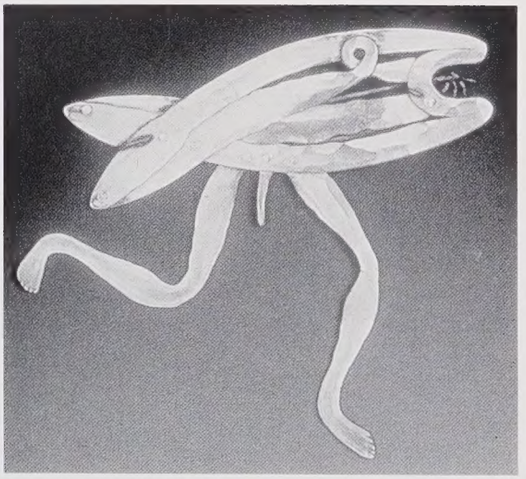
Calder's genius seemed to come about effortlessly. You can imagine him constantly tinkering: bending, hammering, cutting, playing with a piece of wire until – *voila!* there it is – a bird, frog, a face. It makes you humble and jealous to think how innocent he was and yet how accomplished his work seems, even today.

The exhibition, "The Intimate World of Alexander Calder" was shown at the Cooper-Hewitt Museum in New York from October 17 to March 11, 1990 and travels to The Minneapolis Institute of Arts from May 6 to July 15. A beautifully illustrated and inspiring 400-page book of the same name by Daniel Marchesseau, Curator of the Musée des Arts Decoratifs in Paris, where the exhibition originated, was published by Solange Thierry Editeur, Paris and is distributed in the United States by Harry N. Abrams, New York.

Pavel Opocensky is a jeweler and sculptor living in New York.



Articulated Fishbowl, wire, 15 x 20", c. 1928



Running Fish pin, silver, c. 1942. Photo: courtesy Cooper-Hewitt Museum, New York

Vessel 1030, enamel on electroformed copper, 1989

F O C U S

Vessels and vesselmaking
come the closest to establishing a universal language of form;
encompassing ceramic pots, holloware,
fiber baskets, glass and wood-turned bowls,
they are common to all media.
In this focus on June Schwarcz's new vessels,
Vanessa Lynn examines how the well-known enamelist
plays with ambiguity and contradiction,
adding to the language with semantic twists
of material and technique.

June Schwarcz

The Malleable Vessel

by Vanessa S. Lynn

June Schwarcz continues to defy the potential limitations of the enameled vessel. She has spent over 30 years refining a complex array of metalworking techniques, with confidence and freshness, combining them in vessels layered with expression and content. The point of this layering is to force themes of opposition. In color, texture, form and/or technique, Schwarcz pairs the seemingly estranged – setting one against the other – in an effort to reexamine preconceived ideas as well as those previously rejected. It is from these oppositions that Schwarcz's work may be seen to draw much of its stamp, and its strength.

***Vessel 1036*, enamel on electroformed copper, 1989**

Vessel 1030 is deceptively simple, with engaging formal dichotomies. Its upper third is a collar of copper sheet; its squat, lower body consists of individual, iron-plated strips that have been stitched to the bottom interior edge of the collar. Their length appears to span the vessel's base. Although the collar is visually and physically light, it is given the illusion of great weight by appearing to be responsible for the dominant tilt and sag of the vessel's bulbous base. The individual strips that comprise the lower body bulge, stretch and strain from downward pressure, freezing in mental the shape's momentary distortion. In playing iron's malleability against its tensile strength, Schwarcz brings to mind paper jack-o'-lanterns and plaited baskets. But, endowing iron with such startling ephemerality is only the first kinesthetic assault. In silhouette, the angles produced by the collar's compression create a startling sense of movement and lift. With one side stretched upward at 45 degrees, and its opposite side suggesting a crouch, the vessel appears poised for propulsion, defying the weight of its iron and copper mass.

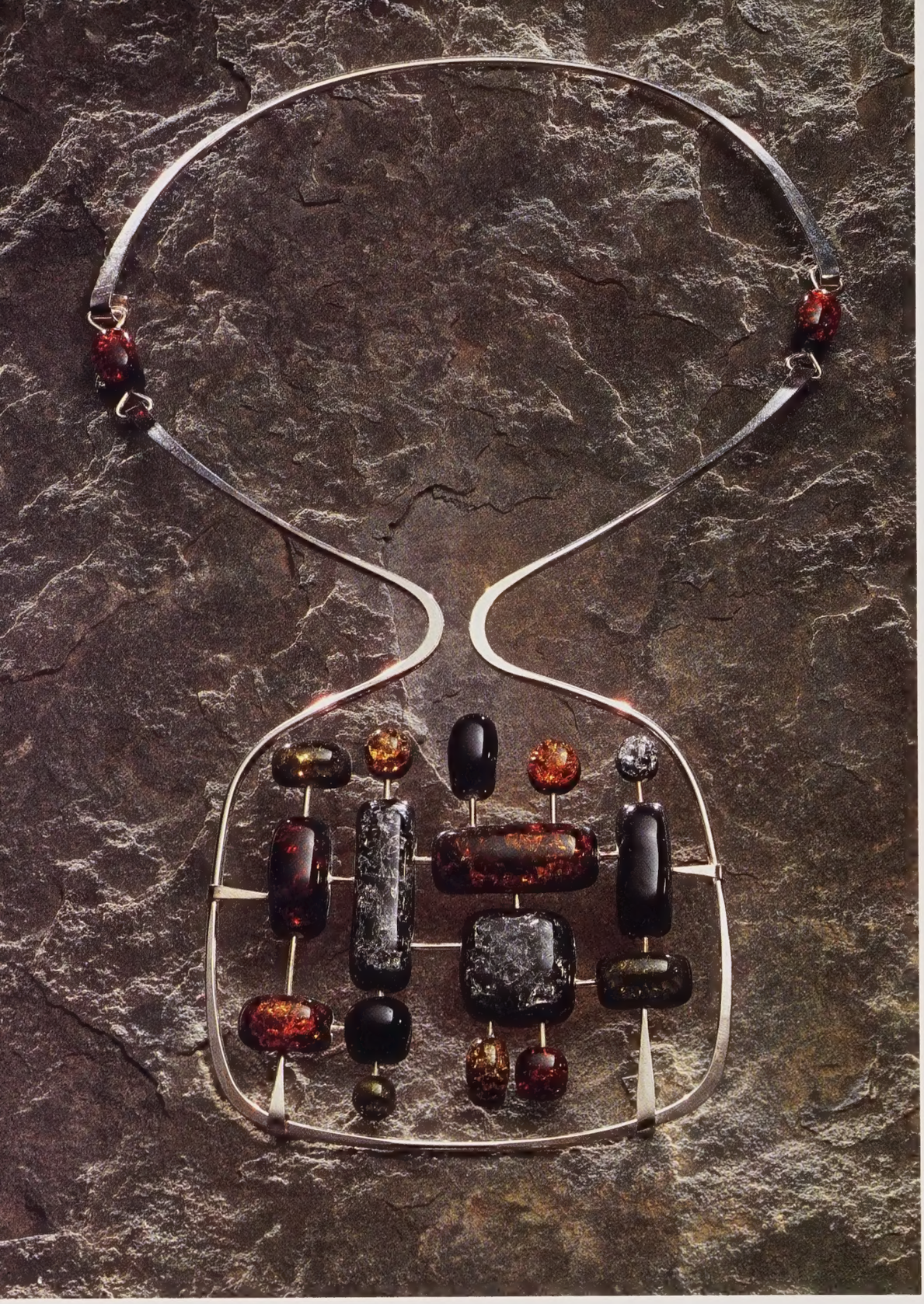
Surface effects continue the dichotomies. The controlled, transparent glazing over foil augments the lightness and delicacy of the collar. The salmon-colored enamel plays on the peaks of the foil, transforming the surface into a subtly shimmering, jeweled crown for the swaying body below. The steady modulation within the single color coaxes even more tones from the rusty patina that encrusts the iron strips just below it. By marrying the incongruous – transparent enamels with electroplated iron – Schwarcz elevates the beauty of metal's decay, as it compares with traditional notions of preciousness.

Schwarcz closes this particular dialogue by cladding the vessel's interior in an unappealing brownish shade of green. Just as eye and hand are drawn to contradictions of the exterior, so, too, the interior attracts despite its initial ugliness. The tilt of collar and lip, the seductiveness of the smooth surface, are all part of a complex strategy to get the viewer to reevaluate any cursory judgments. Schwarcz orchestrates the flow of enamel colors to enhance and transform each other, making us see nuances normally disdained.

Recent work continues this theme. In *Vessel 1036,* for example, the delicate tracery of the plique-à-jour surface is made to converse with sandblasted iron. The refracting, dissolving plane of an etched, bas-taille enamel cuff is paired with the gray solemnity of an iron-plated base. Suddenly, the rough-faced iron becomes a structure and surface with its own stark beauty. The unexpected juxtaposition coerces us to reevaluate the figure-ground relationship, interior and exterior, in something previously assumed to be unexceptional. The enameled cuff is also rethought, becoming precious beyond its skillful execution. It gains stature through our realization of its ability to endow the mundane. The rectangular repetition of its enameled pattern serves as a metaphoric window on the possibility of fresh insights.

Vanessa Lynn is a writer
living in New York
who frequently contributes to
Metalsmith.

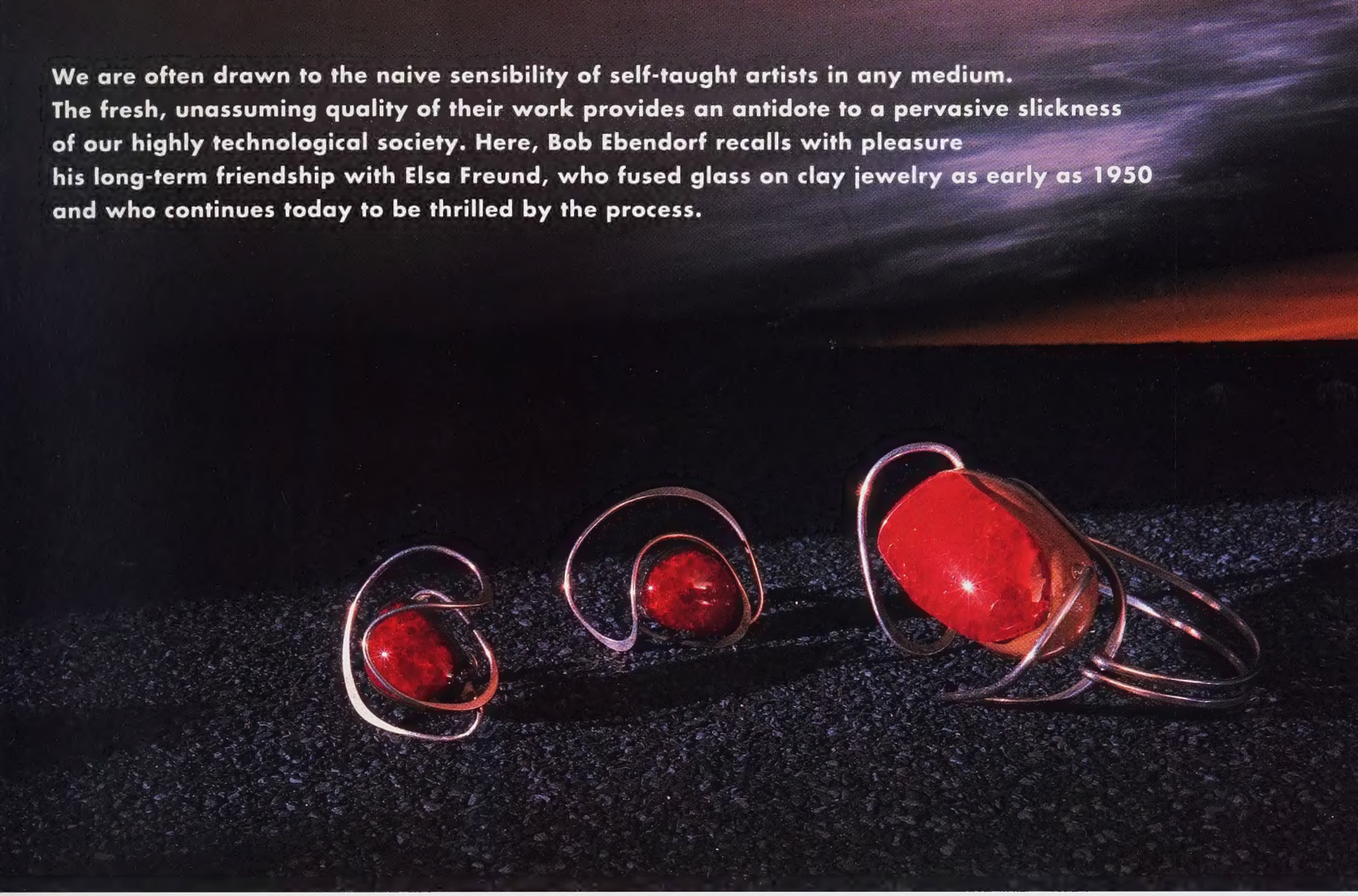
***Vessel 1042*, enamel on electroformed copper, 1989**



Above
Necklace, silver, glass, first place award, jewelry division, 13th Annual Flordia Craftsmen exhibition, 1963
Photo: Jack Ramsdale

Right
Bracelet, earrings, cranberry red glass, sterling silver, c.1965
Photo: Jack Ramsdale

We are often drawn to the naive sensibility of self-taught artists in any medium. The fresh, unassuming quality of their work provides an antidote to a pervasive slickness of our highly technological society. Here, Bob Ebendorf recalls with pleasure his long-term friendship with Elsa Freund, who fused glass on clay jewelry as early as 1950 and who continues today to be thrilled by the process.



BENCHMARK

Elsa Freund
and
"Elsaramic Jewelry"

by Robert Ebendorf

In Elsa Freund's studio, there are several long tables filled with cigar boxes and paper cups, which, in turn, are filled with pieces of colored glass. Each piece of glass, combined with some native Ozark red clay, will eventually become a part of a ring, bracelet or neckpiece.

Elsa Freund did not have a jewelry background. She came to make jewelry in 1950 while teaching a design and craft class in the "learn-by-experiment" method. In one exercise, a variety of scrap materials were assembled into wearable items. This led to her experiments with clay and glass, and then to her so-called "woman-made" jewels.

Elsa had developed her own color sense, having studied painting at the Kansas City Art Institute, at the Colorado Springs Fine Arts Center and Stetson University in Deland, Florida, but she didn't understand soldering. She would just work the silver wire with a hammer and a few hand tools. The hammer would produce thick and thin lines, which she

Three-strand necklace
sterling silver, ceramic, glass
Photo: Jack Ramsdale

augmented with gluing and cold connections, thereby finding ways of putting her design ideas together without having to learn sophisticated techniques. She would work the metal intuitively, then later read about the process. She would try again, look at other jewelry and in this way develop the rudiments of craft. Often she would come up with amusing solutions. For instance, she would use glue to attach pinbacks and then cover the glue with foil to add dimensionality.

She forged wire, working it into design relationships, then adorned the ends of the wire with jewel-like colors in glass and clay. At the time, in the 60s, there may have been ceramic people working in this way, but I did not know of other jewelers who were making these kinds of forms. She would make a simple clay form pad, open a hole in for the silver wire, then lay a piece of glass in the pad to be fired in her small enamel kiln. After it had cooled, she would assemble the piece by hammering and bending the wire to accommodate the "jewel"; the last step was to glue the wire in the hole.

Elsa was not a nationally recognized jeweler. She sent work to one national exhibition "The Art of Personal Adornment," at the American Craft Museum in 1965. Her piece was a tiara made of silver wire, forged, with fused glass and ceramic stones. However, her work was in demand regionally in the South, sold to friends by word of mouth. Most of the women in town had a few pieces. The Mint Museum in Charlotte, NC, purchased a piece for their permanent collection. In the early 60s, Elsa helped start the Florida Craftsmen's Organization, becoming sort of the spiritual leader.

I can recall going to visit her with my mother – even though we were very good friends, it was like attending a formal tea. You would go for an afternoon or evening visit, sit, talk, drink your tea, eat homemade pie or cake. Then, you would be shown her jewelry collection of brooches, necklaces, earrings, rings, buttons, bracelets, and, of course, the one she was working on. She would even show you her watercolors that sparked ideas for jewelry. It was a total experience and we would not go away without buying two or three things. The price of the jewelry was modest, yet to experience Elsa's style as a person and as an artist who loved her work was worth a lot more.

For much of her career, Elsa Freund worked late into the evening, as her husband prepared his art history lecture for the next day's class. They were both full-time artists, he a painter. But Elsa never worried about what was "hot" or the kind of work that was being shown in the museums or galleries. She was more interested in making jewelry that you could use and enjoy wearing every day.

Robert Ebendorf, formerly Professor of Metalsmithing / Jewelry at SUNY, New Paltz, is now an independent jeweler in Santa Monica, CA.

Three Beetles, Two Leaves necklace
sterling silver, ceramic, glass. Photo: Jack Ramsdale

Through the Looking Glass

Observations on Fantasy and the Miniature

by C.E. Licka

When Lewis Carroll wrote *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland,* he modeled his narrative on fairy tales and used nonsense as a means to astonish and contradict the expectations of his Victorian audience, rejecting their sense of reason, moral code and need for a realist literature. In his dream world of marvelous encounters and juxtapositions, he described a variety of irrational shifts in scale – from large to small and vice-versa – to illustrate how scale affects our knowledge of reality.

We are all familiar with those passages where Alice tries to bring her body size under control by swallowing some mysterious potion from a bottle or taking a bite from a small cake. Or, in a striking episode of shifting scale relationships, we find our heroine, nine feet tall, shedding tears because of her plight. But all of a sudden, she is reduced in scale and is found floating in her own ocean of tears.

Alice's fluctuating dimensions raise interesting questions concerning the role of scale in describing situations or objects. How do we know if something is small, large or miniature? At first, it appears simple. To understand anything small or miniature requires its opposite – something large, or at least a norm to measure or compare them. A small object is usually thought of as being less than average in size. A miniature object pushes "smallness" further away from "largeness" and refers to something greatly reduced in scale. What is important to understand in characterizing the size of objects is that we can't use any one of these terms without considering all of them. Consequently, if we lose sight of these scale connections, we find ourselves in the relativistic world of Alice where scale becomes fugitive and evasive.

How important is scale to the metalsmith? Historically, there seem to be many examples of large-scale projects, such as the monumental bronze doors of Bernward or Hildesheim, or Lorenzo Ghiberti's gilded bronze doors for the Baptistery of San Giovanni in Florence, and, more recently, there is Albert Paley's architectural ironwork or Gray Griffin's gates. Common to these works isn't simply a drive towards monumentality; these artists all share a love for detail and precision, which renders even monumental work intimate and human. If man was the measure of all things for the Classical Greek, for the metalsmith and craftsperson in general, the hand has been the measure of all things. By working on a small scale or in the miniature, the metalsmith shares in a tradition that finds its roots in paleolithic ornaments such as the detailed incised relief of a bison executed in antler horn, the *Gemma Augustea,* the interlace decoration of the Sutton Hoo purse lid, Cellini's *Saltcellar* and Carl Fabergé's intricate eggs. In all of these examples, it is apparent that detail, precision, patience and a labor-intensive activity is involved in the act of producing a miniature object.

In trying to understand how the miniature ticks, let's refer to writers, the cultural anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss and the philosopher Gaston Bachelard, who have studied why artists and writers have been fascinated with creating miniature worlds. Lévi-Strauss feels that miniatures are inherently esthetic, but this isn't just a matter of curtailing the amount of materials and resources that go into the making of the object. What we consider to be large-scale works are also related to the miniature through a referential process. When we experience the Sistine Chapel frescoes from below, we seem to be swallowed up in the immensity of

Harriete Estel Berman, *Misstress of the Home Bound to Modern Convenience*
copper construction with painted or plastic-coated surface,
fabric and plastic vacuum cleaner bag, plexiglass window, 27" h. x 7" w., 1981
Bottom of piece reads: "beats, as it sweep, as it cleans"

Michelangelo's heroic and large-scale project. However, if we take the position that Michelangelo has painted a model or miniature of the Church's conception of genesis, we realize what he accomplished: he made the Christian universe intelligible to us by giving us a greatly reduced version of God's creation.[1]

But what value is there in reducing the scale of an object or image? In effect, the miniature or small-scale model tends to satisfy our belief that we have something under control by helping us understand the actual object. This process of understanding the actual object is accomplished by sacrificing its "sensible dimensions" for "intelligible dimensions." If we were to pick up a miniature version of the Empire State building and turn it over and over again in our hands, we are basically turning it over and over again in our thoughts. This helps us to clarify and define our ignorance of the sensible dimensions of a structure that in its totality is incomprehensible to our eyes and mind by helping us to organize and control our responses to the object under scrutiny.[2]

Bachelard, on the other hand, discusses the poetics of the miniature and its capacity to enlarge our vision from the smallest of details by intensifying the space we are observing and isolating the viewer from the active world. For example, when we look through a magnifying glass at a blade of grass, we move across a threshold of a world of ordinary dimensions into the world of the miniature where images, multiply, evolve and pull us away from the banalities of ordinary life. The magnifying glass not only intensifies our experience but also frames a new and poetic world for us to experience. By emphasizing the imaginative power of the miniature to metaphorically engage our minds, we experience an ever-widening spiral of connections.[3]

Another aspect that touches on the miniature has to do with the notion of fantasy. It is apparent that in looking at the fantastic, a great deal of our "hesitation" as well as our acceptance has to do with our view of reality. What we find improbable and unbelievable emerges from our normal expectations. This, of course, varies from culture to culture. But how do we enter fantastic realms? It seems necessary to have some sort of device, literary or visual, indicating to us that we are in the presence of the fantastic.[4]

Our fascination with Alice's miniature world has a great deal to do with collective assumptions about the "real." The paradox inherent in fantasy, however, is how conventional references are used to express the unconventional. In fantasy the inanimate can be animated and the rules of reality suspended by a variety of devices that are pertinent to the miniature: playing games with scale relationships; the transferring of power and control over the object to the viewer and maker; the emphasis on intensifying space by means of miniature details; the generation of meaning through metaphor.

From the writings of Lévi-Strauss and Bachelard, we realize that not everything rendered in miniature is a small-scale replica. Jewelry, for example, contrary to its intimate and personal associations, does not necessarily miniaturize anything. It can both reduce scale either as a homologue or metaphor, or it can enlarge our vision and intensify experience.

Alan Burton Thompson's jewelry and Harriete Estel Berman's miniature sculptures are stylistically different, but they do share some common ground when it comes to exploring the miniature and fantasy.

Thompson's assembled and fabricated jewelry is nostalgic and contemplative in nature. When one picks up any one of his pieces of jewelry, one is immediately thrust into a detailed and intimate childlike world of miniature dimensions. However, there isn't the sense of oversaturating the spatial field with minutiae. Instead, there is a studied placement of a few detailed references and an emphasis on certain formal themes: insets or frames-within-frames to isolate and juxtapose miniature forms and other small objects; a vertical ordering of his compositions and metaphorical associations of journeys and childhood memories.

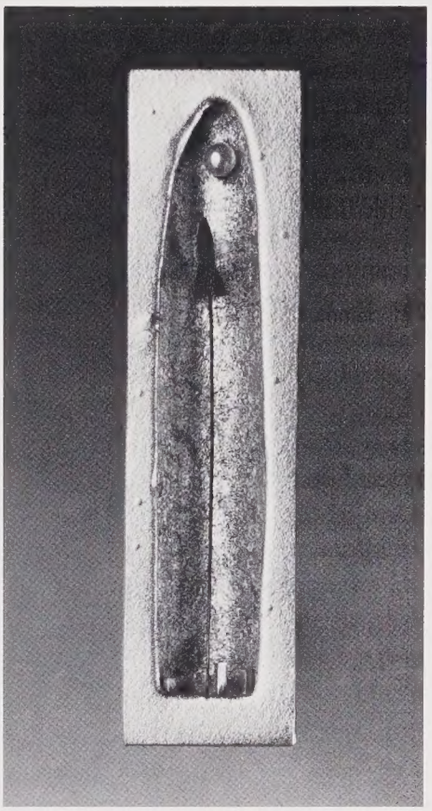
The frame of *Boat* (1987) suggests the shape of a miniaturized canoe. By reducing the normal size of a canoe and juxtaposing it to normal-sized fragments and objects, Thompson has transformed its function as a means for physical conveyance to that of a metaphorical container for viewing its poetic contents.

The allusions to the notion of a journey and the objects in its hull are resonant with references to childhood and memory. The canoe's elliptically shaped contour frames its precious cargo of isolated pieces of shells, opal fragments and a cameo set behind a spoon balanced on the narrow edge of its rim. These remnants and the cameo loom large in comparison to its tiny transport. The canoe, like a vertical ovoid lens seems to magnify the bric-a-brac. The oar/spoon partially echoes the configuration of the canoe and serves as a repoussoir device, pulling us into the compact and intense space of the interior. Once inside this metaphorical vessel, we find the reflective properties of the shells and opals burst with light and highlight the cameo floating above.

The cameo's location at the canoe's tip has affinities with Egyptian mummy masks and Faiyum portraits of the deceased. But the reverential and iconic importance of the cameo also registers another connection that can be traced to the fetishistic use of objects as souvenirs or *memento mori*. Like a variant of Egyptian magical boats symbolizing the rejuvenation of life after death and journeys into the underworld, Thompson's "boat" symbolizes a journey back in time to recover childhood and to rekindle once again "...the gaze of a child confronted with something new, whatever it be, whether a face or a landscape, gilding, colours, shimmering stuffs, or the magic of physical beauty...."[5]

The concave tableau capped by an elliptical arc in *Escape* (1988) displays a tiny rocket, grounded among some mini-high-rise buildings, as it thrusts upwards towards the pearl moon. When handled, the rocket slightly quivers and produces a pendulous effect against the reflective properties of the glittering darting about on the gold-leaf surface. By compressing our field of vision, Thompson metaphorically "escapes" the pull of the adult world and enters a poetic world where meanings and associations begin to multiply.

Alan Burton Thompson, *Escape* brooch
sterling silver, 22k goldleaf, pearl, glitter
3⅛ x ¾ x ½", 1988



This brooch can be likened to a "distant miniature," one that does not atomize anything, that is far away. It allows us to "possess" the intelligible dimensions of a landscape or objects we see in the distance. As children and adults we have all experienced "measuring" or framing a distant view between our fingers. Under these circumstances something very large loses its sensible dimensions. Forms lose their tactile and plastic qualities and are flattened, thereby reconciling distant and disparate things.

In both works we can actively participate by metaphorically taking "hold" and reassembling fragments into an intelligible and poetic world where sensible dimensions are shattered and the child's gaze begins to materialize. These private spaces can be examined and handled intimately, as if we were examining the contents of a child's pocket after a day's quest for the marvelous.

Harriete Estel Berman's miniature tableaux over the past few years have consistently expressed her concern about the status of women in society. She focuses her attention on the domestic plight of women and the myths attached to their roles in her miniature sculpture series titled, "The Family of Appliances You Can Believe In." These appliances tend to function as surrogates, even alter-egos, ironically mirroring the conventional roles of women. By making highly detailed miniature appliances, she allows the viewer to closely inspect interiors and surfaces as if seen through a powerful lense. Once one enters these mini-worlds, issues that seem unwieldy and large, such as alienation in suburbia, the nightmares of consumerism and the ever-present Barbie Doll syndrome, are "reduced" to manageable proportions. Her humorous use of metaphor, inversions of scale and displacement intensify our experience by drawing us into the details of her meticulously fabricated objects.

Prior to this "appliance" series, Berman was involved with fantasy tableaux. Her move to demystifying the myths connected to domestic roles doesn't negate her relation to the structures of fantasy, however. She disrupts the function of appliances, using them as transformative devices and signs to indicate we are in the presence of the fantastic. Her toaster, refrigerator, vacuum cleaner or microwave oven tend to operate in the same way that Lewis Carroll's magic door or mirror did, to indicate that one had entered a fantastic realm. Romantic, Symbolist and Surrealist artists and writers, such as Friedrich, Mallarmé, Redon, Dali and Magritte, all used the window emblematically to refer to fantastic worlds and the mind's interior. In works such as *Eating Out of a Refrigerator, Side-By-Side Role Modeling* or *Reaching Through the Window of Infinite Myths,* all dating from 1981, Berman employs conventional doors and windows to upend our expectations. Upon opening any of them, we enter a world where normal values and scale are subverted.

There is a trace of Marcel Duchamp's irony in the way Berman uses language, humor and images. However, she strips away the esoteric verbal games and tension between images and words we associate with Duchamp. Instead, she calls on the world of consumerism and advertising by incorporating layouts, typography, logos and language associations in her subtle "role warranties" that provide the consumer with certain guarantees "for the life of any relationship" and that "will repair or exchange any role free of charge if found defective or unrealistic in material." She uses warranties, ads and corporate fictions as pseudotexts to subtly attack institutional giants and their sales pitches and as ironic comments on the status of women.[6] Unlike Duchamp, however, Berman fabricates all of her objects. She doesn't enter the world of Duchamp's readymades, where a functional, mass-produced object was ultimately turned into a precious art commodity. Instead, she miniaturizes her objects and uses preciousness and detail to bait the viewer into the not-so-precious domestic world of the homemaker.

Through her "appliances," Berman often questions the sexual role of women. Machine metaphors have been used throughout our century to lampoon sexual activity and to characterize the male and female sexes. Artists such as Duchamp, Picabia and the Surrealists were fond of using machine metaphors in this fashion. Berman, however, makes her machine metaphors more explicit than Duchamp did. For example, *Marry Me For My Hobart* (1981) is a miniature replica of a Hobart mixer. It has a 14k gold ring hanging from the "nose" of the mixer and the words "Dream Whip" positioned on the face of the base. In combination with the words, the ring refers to the homemaker as a domestic and sexual slave. In *Everready Working Woman* (1982), the drill/mixer supplies all the cosmetics and needed paraphernalia to play out the sexual fantasies that seem to be "expected" of the "wonder woman domestic wife" – spark gun trigger, wonder woman electric cord lariat, suction plug and a real drill chuck. And

Harriete Estel Berman, *Everready Working Woman*
copper and brass construction with nickel plate or painted finish; contains operating spark gun seen through clear plastic window, lipstick cartridge in handle and six color eyeshadow compartments housed in raygun body; drill chuck, mixing beaters, Wonder Woman lariat electric cord with suction cup plug, 8½ x 7 x 2½", 1982. Back of dome reads: "mixer, raygun, hot air and drill"

Alan Burton Thompson, *Boat* brooch
plastic, 22k goldleaf, opals, felt, brass, basswood, cameo, shell, 7½ x 1¼ x 1", 1987
Photo: A. Paz

Harriete Estel Berman
Womanizer, Kitchen Queen
blender body and lid, painted copper construction; button panel, plastic lamination with letter applied "love, honor, obey, cherish, mix, blend, stir, cream, spread, bear"; nu-gold. Ballerina pirouettes with music by a wind-up mechanism, 15 x 5 x 5½", 1982

if one is into sexual and domestic bondage, *Misstress of the Home Bound to Modern Conveniences* (1981) helps to accomplish chores with ease. This upright vacuum cleaner displays a nude woman in relief with hands tied to the top of the bag. Bound to her chores both domestically and sexually, the homemaker/sex servant literally has been sucked into the bag of this surrogate machine, her hands tied to the handle in a pose reminiscent of bondage photographs. As the description points out, it "beats as it sweeps as it cleans." Even the title with its intentional misspelling illustrates the inherent tensions between the idea of a woman as a "mistress" and the "stress" of being a homemaker.

In *Womanizer, Kitchen Queen* (1982), a blender capped by a crown is transformed into a critique of societal conventions as they apply to the stereotyped image of the homemaker/wife. It is basically a machine metaphor operating as a substitute for the homemaker and is controlled by 10 separately labeled buttons of expectations and functions: love, honor, obey, cherish, mix, blend, stir, cream, spread and bear. Language is used humorously to question marriage vows, sexuality and childbearing. The miniature ballerina, pirouetting to "When You Wish Upon a Star" is an important counterpoint to her critique of womanhood and expectations. She might signify an ideal realm, role model or even the "wish fulfillment" of a young girl. Like a miniature toy or an object in a reliquary, the ballerina is a precious memory of aspirations and dreams and quite separate from the purposes of the actual "Kitchen Queen" and its "womanizing" operations. The music box with its dancer encased in its transparent chamber is inanimate until activated. Once activated, the ideal realm of fantasy and enchantment is disturbed by the "reality" buttons of a woman's functions.

In Berman's work, it isn't just the highly meticulous fabrication of miniature objects and the skill required to execute them that fascinates the eye and mind. She sets up a surrogate world of appliance/tableaux, moving us into a miniature dimension where the very small communicates larger cultural meanings. She can control these private, intense realms technically, spatially and psychologically. These cathartic objects, or surrogate icons of herself or women in general, let us participate, if only for a moment, in another world where functionality has been methaphorically upended and Alice's "laws" are in operation.

Thompson and Berman are involved with the exploration of intimate and private spaces with details of varying degree. Their mini-worlds allow our imagination to participate by formal, metaphorical and/or projective means. By letting us slip away from reality to enter a miniature zone of reverie, or the absurd world of "applianced" personifications, we are able to relinquish our ties with the enveloping world for a moment. Like the artist who creates a miniature world to control and possess it, we can dominate it too. To synthesize detail, however, requires time and energy on the part of the viewer. In a society steeped in its own transience, these miniature objects ask us to decelerate and look at the world with new eyes.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank the Metals Department and the School of Fine Arts of Miami University of Ohio for giving me the opportunity to explore some of the ideas presented in ths article as a guest lecturer in their 1988 Visiting Artists and Critics Program, and to Jamie Bennett and his graduate students at SUNY, New Paltz, New York.

C.E. Licka teaches Art History at Southeastern Massachusetts University in North Dartmouth.

Notes

1. Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1966), pp. 23–24.

2. *Ibid.*

3. Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969), pp. 148–182. Chapter Seven, *The Miniature*, has been the source for some of my ideas, and Susan Stewart's book, *On Longing: Narratives of the Miniature, the Gigantic, the Souvenir, the Collection* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984), pp. 37–69, 70–103, 132–150.

4. See Tzvetan Todorov, *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre* (Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press, 1980, Eric S. Rabkin, *The Fantastic in Literature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1976) and Diana L. Johnson and George P. Landow, *Fantastic Illustration and Design in Britain, 1850-1930*, an exhibition catalog for a traveling exhibition held at the Museum of Art, Rhode Island School of Design, Cooper-Hewitt Museum and the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of Design, 1979.

5. Charles Baudelaire, *The Painter of Modern Life and other Essays*, trans. Jonathan Mayne (London and New York: Phaidon Press, 1970), p. 8.

6. In Berman's work there is an affinity with other artists who have used pseudo-documentation as an element in their art. For example, Marcel Duchamp's *Monte Carlo Bond* (1924); the ongoing Wonders of the World Museum documentation of Clayton Bailey; Marcel Broodthaer's work; Rebecca Michael's *Book of Hair* (1983) are just the tip of the iceberg of a variety of approaches using texts, objects and alter-egos or surrogates to fabricate imaginative fictions paralleling our world.

PAUL · A · LOBEL

Innovator of Mid-Century Design in Metal and Jewelry

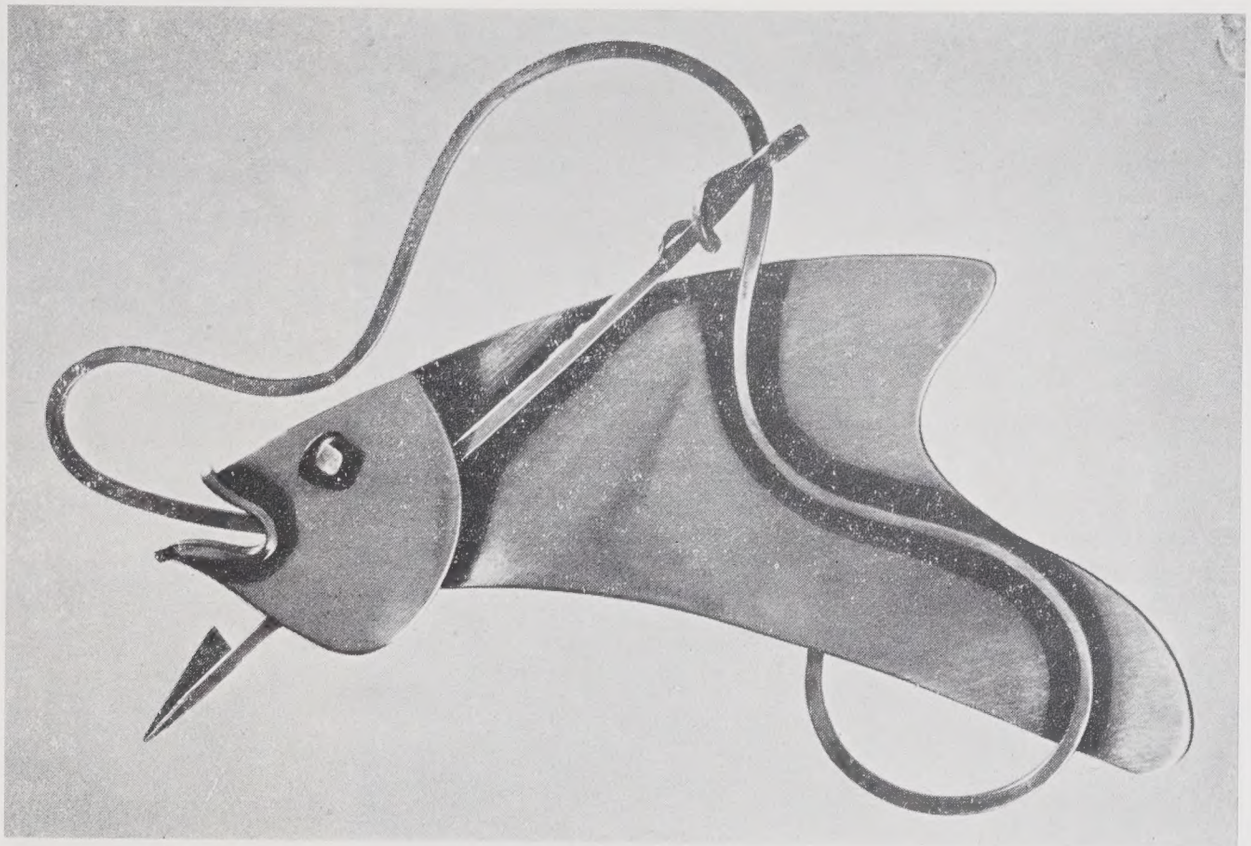
by Toni Lesser Wolf

The accomplishments of Paul A. Lobel, industrial designer, metalsmith, sculptor and cartoonist/illustrator, may be viewed as the quintessential American success story. Born in Romania, at the turn of the century, he emigrated to the United States while an infant, and, from humble beginnings on Manhattan's Lower East Side, grew up to attain a one-man show in Paris in 1925, win two awards at the International Exposition of Decorative Arts in Paris in 1937, be the subject of two exhibitions at the American Museum of Art and The Museum of Modern Art in New York City. He also founded an innovative jewelry and metals studio/shop in New York's Greenwich Village. Furthermore, his contemporaries regarded him with awe and almost everything he attempted came to fruition.

Lobel's first venture into the industrial arts field was a hanging match holder made from a flattened tobacco (or sardine) tin, which he embellished with a pair of stiff calla lillies. This he created while a member of the P.S. 34 art club, where the group's mentor, Mr. Reich, reveled in training his young students to compete with the arts and crafts group of P.S. 62, "the snobs of Hester Street".[1] Lobel entered the work force as soon as he was old enough to qualify for the necessary papers. And, for varying intervals, he worked in a neckwear factory, as a reconditioner of safety razor blades, as a men's clothing examiner and for a ribbon and silk house. After taking a course in mechanical drafting at the Mechanic's Institute, he got a job with an electrical construction outfit as an apprentice. Within six months he had found employment with the U.S. Rubber Co. as a junior draftsman.

Due to the urgent need for ship's radio operations at the beginning of World War I, Lobel signed up for the course offered by the Marconi Communications Institute (later known as R.C.A.). However, by the time he received his operator's license the war was over. Therefore, he joined the merchant marine, instead, due to their constant need for this skill. After two years at sea in Europe and South America, as the merchant fleet began to dwindle and radio operator's jobs were becoming scarce, Lobel enrolled in a course in

Page from Paul Lobel's jewelry catalog at his West 4th Street studio, 1949. Courtesy: Judith Lobel Arkin

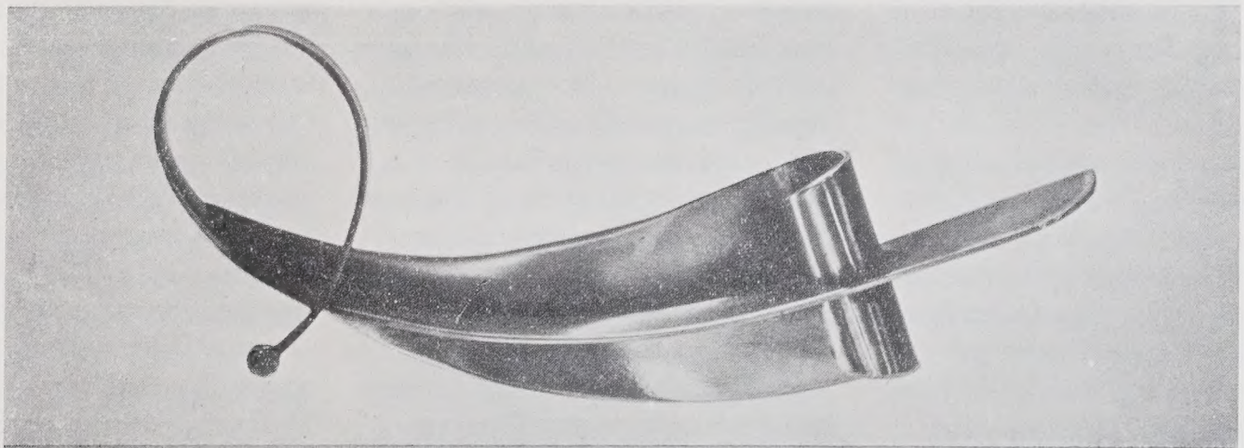


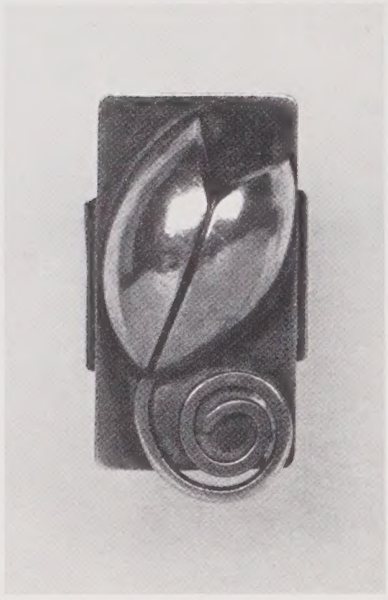
TRURO 35.00

BROOCHES
in sterling silver

Add federal tax to prices quoted.

INTERSECTION 12.00





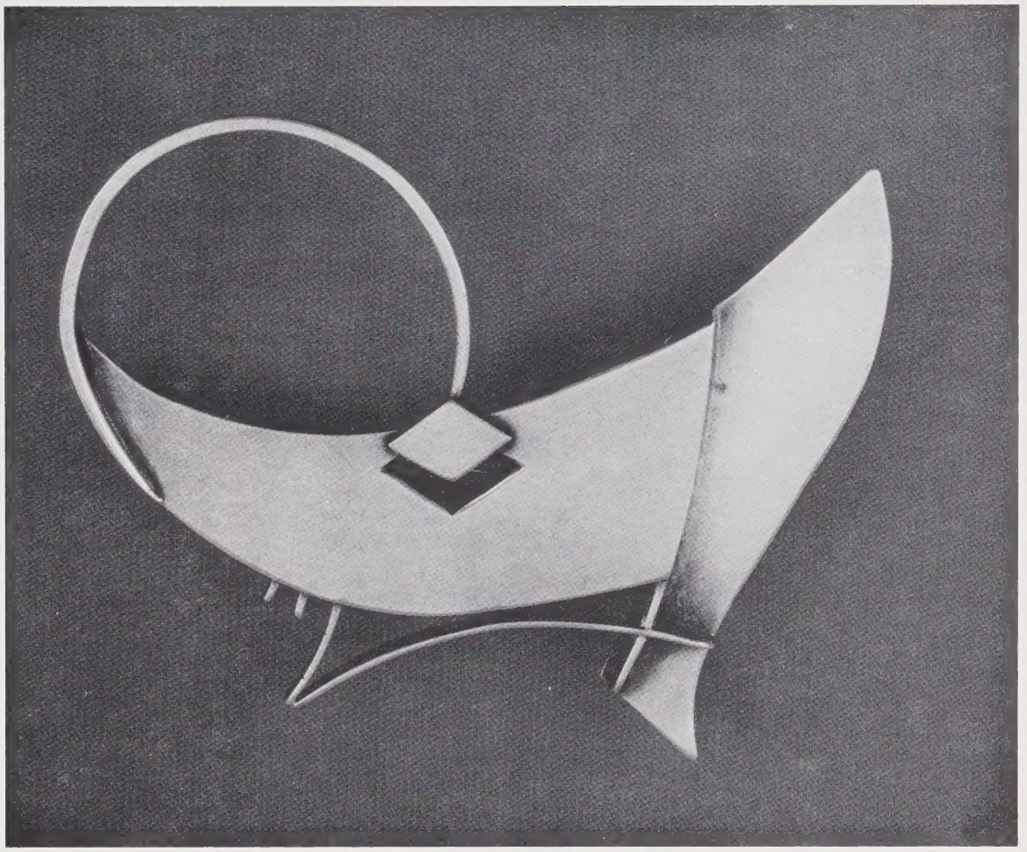
Pin and two rings
sterling silver, c. 1948
Collection: the author.
Photos: Jan Frank

commercial art at Pratt Institute in Brooklyn, New York. And, within a year, he had rented desk space with an advertising agency in the Tribune Building.

Having also studied illustration with cartoonist/painter, Boardman Robinson at the Art Students' League, Lobel did a good deal of sketching in his spare time. He sold a series of drawings to Brooks Atkinson, then editor of the Book Review Section of *The New York Times* and also did decorative black-and-white sketches for the then nascent *New Yorker* magazine and *Colliers' Weekly,* in addition to designing book jackets.

By the end of a year, he had saved enough money to go to Europe, and, in 1925, arrived in Paris, just in time for the groundbreaking "Exposition International des Arts Decoratifs et Industriels Modernes." After viewing the famous "Art Deco" exhibition, he realized that a revolution in three-dimensional design was under way. It was at this juncture that Lobel began his first experiments with metal (save his experience at P.S. 34). One of his earliest pieces was a miniature bull-ring (although he had not yet even witnessed a bullfight). In fact, he was to do several sculptures on that theme, reminiscent of Picasso's bullfights – stylistically influenced by the latter's work done in Antibes in the 1940s.[2] In the summer of 1926 Lobel exhibited 35 works, including drawings, etchings, paintings, metalwork and sculpture, in a one-man show at the Grande Librairie Universelle in Paris. During the next year, he toured London, Rome, Florence, Rotterdam, Brussels and Berlin, then, broke, returned to America where he again rented desk space and tried to resume his advertising career. But he was haunted by the modern design that he had been exposed to in Paris. So, after borrowing money to open a metalwork studio on Lexington Avenue, he sought out architect Eugene Schoen, an enthusiast of modern design, whom he had formerly been introduced to by Boardman Robinson. Schoen was in the process of opening a gallery devoted to showing the work of designers and craftsmen imbued with the spirit of modernism. The gallery's inaugural exhibition was a one-man show of works in brass by Paul Lobel. As a result, he received several commissions for private estates and yachts. In 1928, he participated in a modern design exhibition sponsored by R.H. Macy & Co. and in the "Exhibition of Decorative Arts" at the National Arts Club, New York City, where he showed decorative sculpture.

Between 1929 and 1931, Lobel, along with Leo J. Uris, founded the firm of Lobel-Uris, which produced metal and glass accessories. Among the company's more well known commissions were those for the Barbizon-Plaza, St. Moritz, St. George and Dixie hotels. Lobel-Uris collaborated with architect Lawrence Emmons on the interior metalwork for the Hupmobile showrooms in Hartford, Connecticut. The firm was represented in the first "Contemporary American Industrial Art Exhibition" in 1929, organized by Richard F. Bach for The Metropolitan Museum of Art, in "Decorative Metalwork and Cotton Textiles – the Third International Exhibition of Contemporary Industrial Art", sponsored by the American Federation of Arts in 1930–31 and at the Architectural League of New York (also

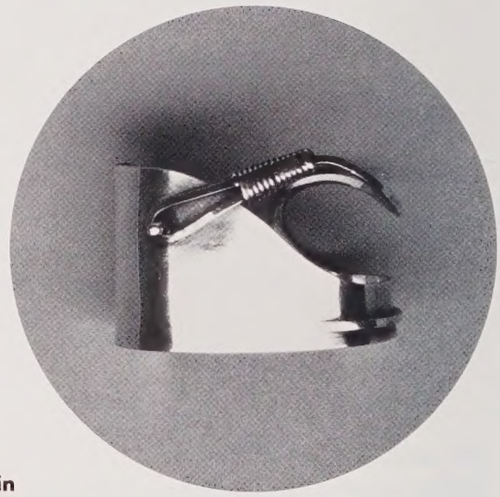


***Pin*, sterling silver, c. 1948**
Photo: courtesy Fifty-50 Gallery, New York

in 1931). Included in the exhibition were andirons, doorstops, fire and room screens, mirrors and small objects fabricated from cold rolled steel, bronze, chrome, glass, polished nickel or asbestos, alone or in combination. Stylistically, the screens, andirons and doorstops were akin to the designs of Edgar Brandt, while the holloware and small chrome or polished nickel accessories were consistent with the streamlined esthetic of the time, practiced by several modern designers such as Raymond Loewy, Gilbert Rohde, Kem Weber and Walter Dorwin Teague. Lobel, himself, participated in subsequent exhibitions at The Metropolitan Museum of Art, where, in 1934, he was represented by glass plates manufactured by Regal Art Glass Co., drinking glasses made by T.G. Hawkes and Co. and a cocktail shaker and tea service produced by International Silver, which recalls similar designs during the same period by Jean Puiforcat, Eliel Saarinen and Harry Bertoia. At the "Industrial Arts Exposition: in 1934, sponsored by the National Alliance of Art and Industry and held at Rockefeller Plaza in New York City, Lobel exhibited a "U" lamp (manufactured by Lobel-Uris) along with glass by Regal Art Class Co. and a child's three-piece silver set by International Silver Co. Lobel was responsible for the alterations and complete ground floor showrooms design for Hattie Carnegie, between 1932 and 1934, and designs in metal for the Alexander Herz Co., as well as toys for R.G. Kreuger and the Vall-Kill Shops.

Ever the innovator, Lobel began experimenting with bending glass in the early 1930s, which led to the development of the Benduro process. The line, designed to follow the new trend towards informality with elegance, was in operation from 1935 to 1943 and offered candlesticks, ashtrays, cocktail mixers, tables, magazine racks, bowls, dishes, boxes, mirrors, wastepaper baskets and vanities – all in glass, glass and metal, or plastics. Benduro produced five distinct kinds of glass, textured either in a "diced" or "ribbed" pattern, in several colors. The Benduro line won the Home Furnishings Silver Medal and the Ceramics and Crystal Works Bronze Medal at the International Exposition of Decorative Arts in Paris in 1937. Lobel continued making objects in silver and showed in "Contemporary Industrial and Handwrought Silver" at the Brooklyn Museum in 1937 and in "Silver: An Exhibition of Contemporary American Design by Manufacturers, Designers and Craftsmen" at The Metropolitan Museum of Art that same year. Benduro glass plates and a figure were included in the "Contemporary Industrial Art Exhibition" at The Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1940. From 1937 to 40 Lobel did experiments with individual transportation units for the New York World's Fair, designs in marble and a series of lamps for America. Designs, Inc. Russel Wright. He even tried his hand at wooden furniture designs, as witnessed by his woven slat furniture for Broadweave Furniture Co., from 1941 to 43. The line included screens, tables, trays, hampers and other household accessories.

Forced by wartime metal shortages to curtail his large-scale pieces forged from steel, nickel, etc., Lobel turned, in 1943, to sterling silver and its possibilities for jewelry and small sculpture. Originally running an



Necklace and bracelet
sterling silver, c. 1948
Collection: Ina Feuerstein

industrial design studio on Fifth Avenue, in 1944, he opened a studio/shop at 165 West 4th Street in Greenwich Village "where town and country merge, for here [one] really meets America."[3] Lobel had "decided there was too much trash in costume jewelry and that since women are receptive to simple forms executed of good material, it behooved him to experiment with decorative designs of commonly seen objects – musical instruments ranging from grand pianos to weeping mandolins; animals of all kinds, from stylized horses and fox heads to a semihumorous skunk regarding with amazement his sweeping tail; leaf and flower forms and such conceits as a bracelet bearing a child skipping rope or a kitten with a waving tail."[4]

In his shop, the visitor encountered, along with the jewelry, hammered copper and brass panels on the walls, furniture and accessories made of interlaced natural cedar Venetian blind slats (by Broadweave), leather objects, sculptural ornaments, clocks and handwrought tea sets. Lobel spent time studying the metalwork of medieval armorers at The Metropolitan Museum of Art. One can see this influence in some of his jewelry, notably in his falcon bracelet. His jewelry was exhibited in "Modern Handmade Jewelry" at The Museum of Modern Art in 1946, "Jewelry for Under $50" at The Walker Art Center in 1948 and "From the Neck Up" at the American Museum of Natural History in 1951.

Paul Lobel was a kind of unofficial guru to the group of jewelers maintaining shops in Greenwich Village in the 1940s and 50s, which included Sam Kramer, Art Smith (whom, incidentally, Lobel had invited to work for him) and Ed Wiener. He was the first to open such a studio/store, coming during, rather than at the close of, World War II. His work differed from that of his peers in its general simplicity and lack of stones or materials other than silver. This may stem, in part, from the fact that Lobel tended to be mostly influenced by an industrial design idiom, i.e., a stark geometric stylization (seen especially in his flower, animal and nonobjective motifs), relating to the machine aesthetic of the 1930s, rather than, for example, primarily, by the tribal and biomorphic vocabulary that so inspired Art Smith or the blatant surrealism that informed Sam Kramer's output.

Lobel's sculptures, which comprised an exhibition entitled "Shining Birds and Silver Beasts" at the American Museum of Natural History in 1949, mostly depicted animals and recognizable human personalities such as Adam and Eve, Napoleon, a matador or a fencer. His approach was whimsical caricature – almost cartoonlike – recalling his beginnings as a cartoonist in the 1920s. His "sculptures...range from rhythmic abstract designs to humorously literal interpretations of animals....
In several examples, Mr. Lobel shows the various steps he has followed in finding the most suitable expression of an animal's characteristics as adapted to the medium of handwrought silver and small designs... Inherent traits are often suggested by portraying the characteristic motion of an animal, bird or fish, rather than by emphasizing its anatomical structure."[5] The sculptures also reflected Lobel's awareness of popular trends in 1950s design such as those influenced by Picasso, African and

Above
***Longhorn sculpture*, sterling silver, c. 1953**
Photo: Cindy Cetlin

Right
***Bracelet*, sterling silver, c. 1948**
Collection: Fifty-50 Gallery, New York
Photo: Jan Frank

tribal art (especially masks) and biomorphism.[6] They, like the cubist sculpture of Alexander Archipenko, are most successful when viewed from the front. Constructed from simple, flat shapes cut from silver sheet and embellished with calligraphically bent wire, they are essentially two-dimensional, at most, low-relief metal sketches. As lyrical as his shapes and lines in space might be, Lobel does not lead the eye around his sculptural creations, and, in the last analysis, they remain solely charming tabletop ornaments and lack the formal power of the best of his abstract jewelry designs. The sculptures were meant to be humble, modest decorative pieces intended for small apartments and like budgets. Lobel closed his Greenwich Village shop sometime in the 1950s.

In the early 1970s, after designing objects in plastic, some of which were represented in "Plastics U.S.A.," which toured the U.S.S.R. in 1961, Lobel turned his attention to what he called "paperteering," creating paper sculptures from newspaper, cellophane tape and scissors, similar to origami, except that the Japanese craft does not employ scissors. In 1972, the New York Public Library's Donnell branch held an exhibition of Lobel's paperteering, entitled "Mainly Masks." These paper masks showed the influence of African and American Indian masks similar to their counterparts fashioned from silver, brass and copper, which Lobel had formerly done as jewelry.

Paul A. Lobel, who died in 1983, will certainly be remembered for his versatility in so many media, as well as for his silver jewelry and sculpture. He was a true "Renaissance man," one whose "ambition [was] to own a room containing a catalog of every article manufactured in the U.S. and to work in all known materials under a spreading chestnut tree."[7] He may not have come close to his goal but his dauntlessness and ambition most certainly left their imprint on mid-century design.

Toni Lesser Wolf is a jewelry historian, lecturer, curator and writer living in New York City.

Notes

1. Paul A. Lobel memoirs, Archives of American Art.
2. Cindy Cetlin, Review: "Paul A. Lobel 1900–1983 Memorial Exhibition," the Hudson River Museum, *Metalsmith*, Winter, 1985, p. 43.
3. *New York Visitor*, June, 1944 (Archives of American Art).
4. *Ibid.*
5. Press release, American Museum of Natural History: "Lobel Small Sculptures exhibited at American Museum," February 28, 1949 (Archives of American Art).
6. Cetlin, *op. cit.*
7. "These Two Hands, A Greenwich Villager Makes Many Objects From Many Materials," *The New York Visitor*, June, 1944 (Archives of American Art).

Clark interview; continued from page 15

aspirations, but it rarely has the courage to go over the edge the way Künzli's does. So, one ends up with the worst of both worlds. You get jewelry that inhibits you, that you cannot wear without a certain commitment to looking ridiculous and perhaps an exaggerated sense of anxiety. And yet you don't get the payoff. It's not a rich enough object intellectually and conceptually to justify making all those elaborate compensations for the piece. Also many mistake a lack of wearability with conceptual content – they are not necessarily the same thing.

And that's not enough to justify a $2,000 purchase for most people?

Not for most people. I think there is something bogus about that work, and as far as American jewelry is concerned, that is a big problem. There are a lot of people making work that is neither fish nor fowl, nor good red herring and few critics to cry "fraud"! So, when I buy a piece, I find myself drifting back to whether I can wear it without having to restrict who I am. As a man, I don't have much opportunity to be involved with the more theatrical pieces.

Also, I have found that when a man wears jewelry, it's a real invitation. Partly, it's fun, in that everybody comments. Everywhere you go, someone has to make a remark. But people can't understand why, as a man, you are wearing something...

Less of a comment and more of a crack?

Yes. If you are wearing a little pin that says you belong to the Rotary, or something like that, they understand. They expect anything a man wears on his lapel to mean something. It's funny in the beginning, but very wearisome on an ongoing basis. If you wear something very conventional and small, there's not much comment, but the moment you begin to wear something exotic or larger, that response comes back. "What does it mean?"

The whole experience hasn't poisoned me, however. It has made me a lot wiser. First of all, I realize that the ceramics and the jewelry were not meant to run together commercially. They have nothing in common. I couldn't take enough time off from the ceramics gallery, which has been growing at a wonderful pace, to turn the jewelry gallery around. I just didn't have that freedom. When we started, I felt that the two could work in tandem. But they didn't work in tandem. There was a tremendous amount of friction and hostility and disagreement between the two fields.

And no economy of effort?

No. There were a few economies of cost, in that we had the same telephone and things like that. But there was no economy of effort. And it was apparent that the job of getting the jewelry going was in many ways a greater job than getting the ceramics going 10 years ago. Ceramics has an enormous amount of art literature that goes back for centuries. Ceramics has had an art status on and off through time, so it was a lot easier for us. We had to work hard at developing the ceramics market, but we had a lot on our side to begin with. Jewelry does not have the same history or the same resources.
Do you think the fact that jewelry is primarily used by women helps to undercut its credibility as a serious art form in a male-dominated art world?
I've never thought of it in those terms, but as you say it, there is a sort of a chilling truth to that. Our entire culture is managed with that sexist undercurrent. But remember, jewelry has also been a man's business. The major jewelers of the world are not women.

Men are the producers as opposed to the consumers?

Yes. I think the fact that the consumers are women doesn't make that much difference. There is still a strong male power trip involved in jewelry. It's part of the way men have traditionally dominated women. When a man turns up with a $100,000 diamond necklace for his wife or his mistress, then, yes, on the one hand it's a gift. On the other hand, it's an expression of his power. Interestingly, we found that with a lot of the women who collected jewelry, it is their male partners who instigate the sale. In many cases, I don't think the women would even collect it but for the man's interest. The men see the work and bring their wives in and encourage them to wear more adventurous jewelry. So, I'm sure there's some sexism involved but it's also a voyeuristic trip for the men who secretly might want to wear the jewelry themselves.

Let's go back to your talk at the SNAG conference. One of the things that most intrigued me was your point that the craft world needs to court the decorative arts curators rather than the fine arts curators, because, for historical reasons, the decorative arts curators tend to be more accepting of crafts. Did you make any inroads with the decorative arts community with respect to jewelry?

We made a few inroads and placed some pieces in museums. We found that the level of interest in jewelry was definitely far less than ceramics. The jewelry didn't seem to excite the curators very much. But that's not a problem. That is something that can be turned around. The decorative arts curators are certainly historically informed, if not contemporaneously so. With education, they can be won over. It's a matter of spending time with these people, showing them the work and encouraging them to take part in activities. It's simply a matter of making friends. But as for the fine arts curators, at this stage there is no hope.

I don't necessarily believe in a hard and fast division between the decorative and fine arts. I like objects. Therefore, I admire the decorative arts world. The reason I advocated pursuing the decorative arts curators is pragmatic. That is, the organizational reality of the art world at the moment. I think it is very foolish to ignore that fact. That doesn't mean you don't try to change things. We work at softening the boundaries between the decorative and fine arts all the time, but at this point in the history of art, there is no revisionist movement in sight. There is no sympathy towards changing those lines of division. Don't believe the egalitarian things that fine arts curators say to you when they come to conferences like SNAG. They don't want to make a lot of enemies, so they'll say all the right things, but when they go back to their departments, they're not going to vote one penny's worth of their funds to your concerns.

So, there is no hope of interesting the fine arts community in ceramics or jewelry or both?

Ceramics is different. It has made many inroads, but, even so, ceramics is not fully part of the fine arts world. It's expected to live on the cusp of the fine and decorative arts. Actually, it's a place I enjoy being, and I have little desire to move at present.

And in jewelry, there's not a hope?

Jewelry does not live on the same cusp. There is no hope of fine arts legitimization in this century. We were told by the fine arts curators in the bluntest of terms that they were not interested at all. It is just not a field that is important to them.

They wouldn't even look at it?

No, they wouldn't. The same is true of a lot of the art press.

So, if they were in the gallery to look at a ceramics show, they wouldn't even go into CDK to have a look?

It was interesting that even though CDK was right there, and it was only a matter of stepping through the door, many people chose never to walk through that door. We would drag many in, kicking, screaming and protesting. If we got them inside, they would look around politely and step out. In a year of exciting, very special shows, very few art professionals were touched in the slightest with perhaps the one exception of Kiff Slemmon's show.

Does the fact that fine art prices have risen so astronomically provide any hope for the acquisition of craft by museums? There are only a few

museums that can afford a $40,000,000 Van Gogh. A $2,000 Jamie Bennett brooch is a bargain, by comparison.

I can only apply the same analogy that I used at the SNAG conference. People who get their kicks buying ocean liners are not prepared to compromise and start collecting canoes. The museums don't perceive affordable craft as an option. Their option now is simply to purchase fewer paintings and sculptures. They still want to play the game at the top of the power tree. Jamie Bennett is a wonderful jeweler, but, in the world of fine arts, he cannot be compared politically with the top painters and sculptors. So, no, this isn't a "trickle-down" economy. Crafts have always been affordable. There hasn't been a period in our modern history when they have not been a bargain, and, today, even at the higher prices, they are still a bargain. And that has had no impact whatsoever. People buy crafts because of a belief structure not because it is relatively cheap. Affordability is not the issue, passion is.

Can we create that belief structure, or is it so ingrained culturally that all we can hope for is to make small inroads here and there?

There is the potential to build a serious market for art jewelry. It is a tough undertaking because you have to run against so many shibboleths that are so ingrained in society, but it can be done. However, it is going to require some tough, even brutal, criticism. Jewelry lacks a critical language that is pertinent to its own, unique character. With some exceptions such as Bruce Metcalf, writing on jewelry is about retaining the status quo, not questioning it.

But progress can only be as good as the art. I started out feeling much more sympathetic towards American jewelry than European jewelry. I thought the whole intellectual bias toward European was snobbish and unjustified. I must admit that after a period of being much closer to the field, I can understand why European jewelry has the reputation and the higher status. They have dealt with the notion of bringing a real piece of jewelry and a real piece of art together much more successfully. I'm generalizing, of course, but the European pieces often turn out to be really wearable jewelry and, at the same time, very unique and different and exciting. The pieces that are conceptual are complex enough on an intellectual level to justify the theater that the wearer is going to have to indulge in. I think someone like Giji Bakker is a wonderful jeweler. His stuff is crazy, it's inventive, it's exciting and it is very wearable. I find it very easy to snap his football players brooch on my jacket and go out. It really does work very well, and it is challenging.

In revisiting American jewelry with that point of view, I feel that "academic jewelers" have become perhaps too academic. It has amazed me, anyway, that an artist can accept the label "academic." There's no other field in the art world where that label is worn with pride, because the whole notion of an academic artist is almost an oxymoron. But it is a very honest label, because a lot of the jewelry does exist on a purely academic level. It doesn't work as "tough art." It doesn't work as good jewelry. These are artifacts that are passed around at university exhibitions, created more with the academic committees within the university in mind than they are with the notion of art or the notion of jewelry. In other words, people are thinking about their move from associate professor to full professor. They're thinking about tenure. They're often trying to impress the art faculty by making jewelry that looks like art so the art faculty can see that they're artists, too. There is a bit of a crisis there.

And an interesting thing that I found talking to many of the jewelers was the number of them who did not like jewelry!

Don't like to wear it? Or don't like the field?

They don't seem to like the field. Very few jewelers, by the way, wear much jewelry. Most of them almost take pride in the fact that they will wear very little jewelry. Some never wear it. When they do, they do not wear the kind of jewelry they often insist that other people should wear. They will wear something very tiny and understated that they can live with very easily. And often the jewelers who make the most eccentric jewelry never wear eccentric jewelry themselves.

Except perhaps at a SNAG conference?

Yes, when their career is on show. A lot of jewelers are really frustrated sculptors. And, if they had the opportunity, they would rather have an object on a plinth in a gallery than make jewelry. I have had many discussions with jewelers who said, "Jewelry is the compromise I make. I can sell the jewelry. I can't sell my sculpture. But, if I had the choice, I would stop making jewelry tomorrow and I would start making sculpture." This took me by surprise. Is that attitude reflected in the work? Is that compromise apparent? Yes. Audiences looking at the jewelry instinctively feel that the integrity claimed for the work isn't there. Ceramics went through a very similar period and it was very destructive to the medium. During the entire 60s it was considered very entre-nous for you to make a pot. And if you made a pot, you had to somehow disguise it. You had to call it something else. You couldn't say, "Hey, look! I'm a potter. I make pots. This pot is art but it's also just a pot." People like Richard DeVore did stand up early on and say, "Don't call my pot sculpture. It was born of a pottery tradition, not a sculptural one." I'm not sure how many jewelers want to stand up and say, "This is not a piece of sculpture but comes out of a tradition of jewelry. But it is such a great piece of jewelry that it is also a piece of art."

Ceramists invoke their uniqueness and independence all the time now, and that's a sign of their confidence. It's a sign of a field that is saying, "All right. Now we are playing on our own terms."

There's a degree of maturity there.

Yes. The art world can accept us or reject us, but they accept us or reject us on our own terms, not theirs. I think that in jewelry, to put it in the crudest terms, many artists are trying to suck up to the art world by making pieces that the jewelers think will be acceptable rather than working out of a personal agenda and saying, "I know you're going to have problems with this because it looks like a conventional piece of jewelry, but it's not. And anyway, it's what I make, it's who I am."

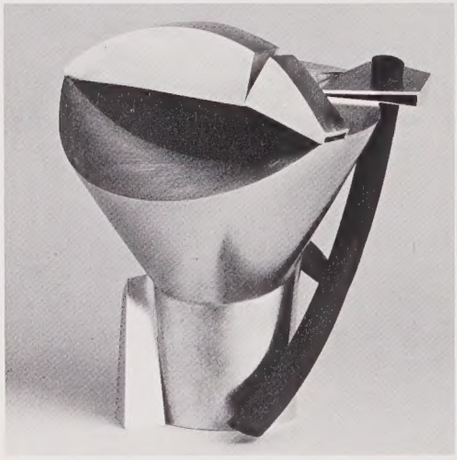
I was very impressed by your belief that a gallery has to earn exclusive representation of its artists through performance. This strikes me as a very fair and humane approach, but one that is very different from other galleries with your reputation. Could you comment on this?

First of all, what the jewelry field desperately needs is strong commercial support. The artists will hate me for saying this, but art is only as free as its patronage. There are always exceptions but, in general, art movements do not succeed without generous, farsighted patrons. The only way you can get through to patrons is by having strong galleries. If a jeweler takes his or her work and spreads it all around with one piece of work in every jewelry gallery in the country, no one dealer will commit to him. But if he has a couple of dealers who are sympathetic to his work, those dealers now have something to gain and lose. If the jeweler becomes successful, the dealers become part of that success. There's reason for them to go out on a limb. There's reason for them to push you in their publicity There's reason for them to do all the things you would hope they would do for you. They're not going to do it when they know your exhibition schedule includes 60 galleries in the next two years.

Exclusivity can be a matter of power, not necessarily the exercise of the gallery's power over the artist, but rather the power of the gallery to sell enough work to justify the artist/gallery relationship. We do not hold our artists to exclusive agreements if we cannot deliver. We might ask for it at the beginning, but, a year later, if we can't make the sales, we voluntarily relinquish the arrangement and continue to work with them as free agents.

It might sound restrictive to an artist, but it's a simple equation. Instead of dealing with six dealers, you're dealing with one or two. And that dealer then has something to lose. You're important to them. The way we work around here is that the publicity and development for each artist is a year-round thing. It does not just happen around exhibition. It never stops.

Donald Friedlich is an artist who makes jewelry. Judith Mitchell is a writer who wears it. They live together in Providence, Rhode Island.



Marjorie Schick: A Retrospective

School of Fine Arts Gallery, Indiana University, Bloomington, IN
January 19 – February 9, 1990

by Lydia Brown Finkelstein

Above left: *Container*, rubber hose, brass, raised, constructed, 8¾ x 8 x 8½", 1983
Photo: Michael Cavanagh & Kevin Montague, Indiana University Art Museum

Above right: *Armlet*, brass, 5 x 4 1/16 x 4½", 1967
Photo: Michael Cavanagh & Kevin Montague, Indiana University Art Museum

Marjorie Schick's 26-year review of her work in various metals combined with paper, string, rubber hose, raffia and wood guided viewers through a series of metal and emotional experiences that, at times, verged on chaos and anxiety, cornball jokes and sharp urban wit, sublimely edited introspection verging on spirituality, then grounded by reassuring ritual.

Over 100 works dating from 1965, when Schick received her MFA with distinction from Indiana, up to 1989 were installed by the artist for the event. Since Schick has stated she creates her body sculptures with the human figure in mind, the presentation of her work, without mannequins or models, became as important as the individual pieces themselves.

Her recent total body designs of multiple painted plywood shapes, joined with colored string and dowels, resembling American Indian backpacks or priest's vestments, were suspended from the ceiling, hung or projected from the gallery walls. Several angular neck-and-shoulder sculptures of riveted and painted wood dowels seemed incomplete without the presence of a human personality to fulfil the destiny of a ritual object for worship, exploration or hunting.

The fact that these body works are both finished, and yet not finished without the body, creates an esthetic paradox that sets Schick's work apart from functional jewelry created to be worn by a patron who wants adornment without involvement.

Today the primary experience that motivates feeling, perception and action has been co-opted by the mass media which selects, edits and interprets events and relationships for us, the voyeurs. Schick's attitudes and belief systems that delve into the inner states of reality. What is important about Schick's work is its utter nonusefulness, but intentional seriousness as abstracted experience.

In the 1970s she began constructing oversize brooches, cuffs and neckpieces that she calls her Cycladic Series. These polished brass and copper shapes frequently combined with a coiling and sensuously curving black rubber hose are sculptures to be worn by an archetypal figure in a dream. One can certainly imagine them worn by dancers in a Joffrey Ballet sequence. The neoclassical motif of sleekly constructed geometric interlocking shapes, smooth surfaces and rubber convey a cerebral sexuality ordered by the hand of the artist. Instead of industrial objectivity, one feels drawn into an encounter between desire, control and capitulation.

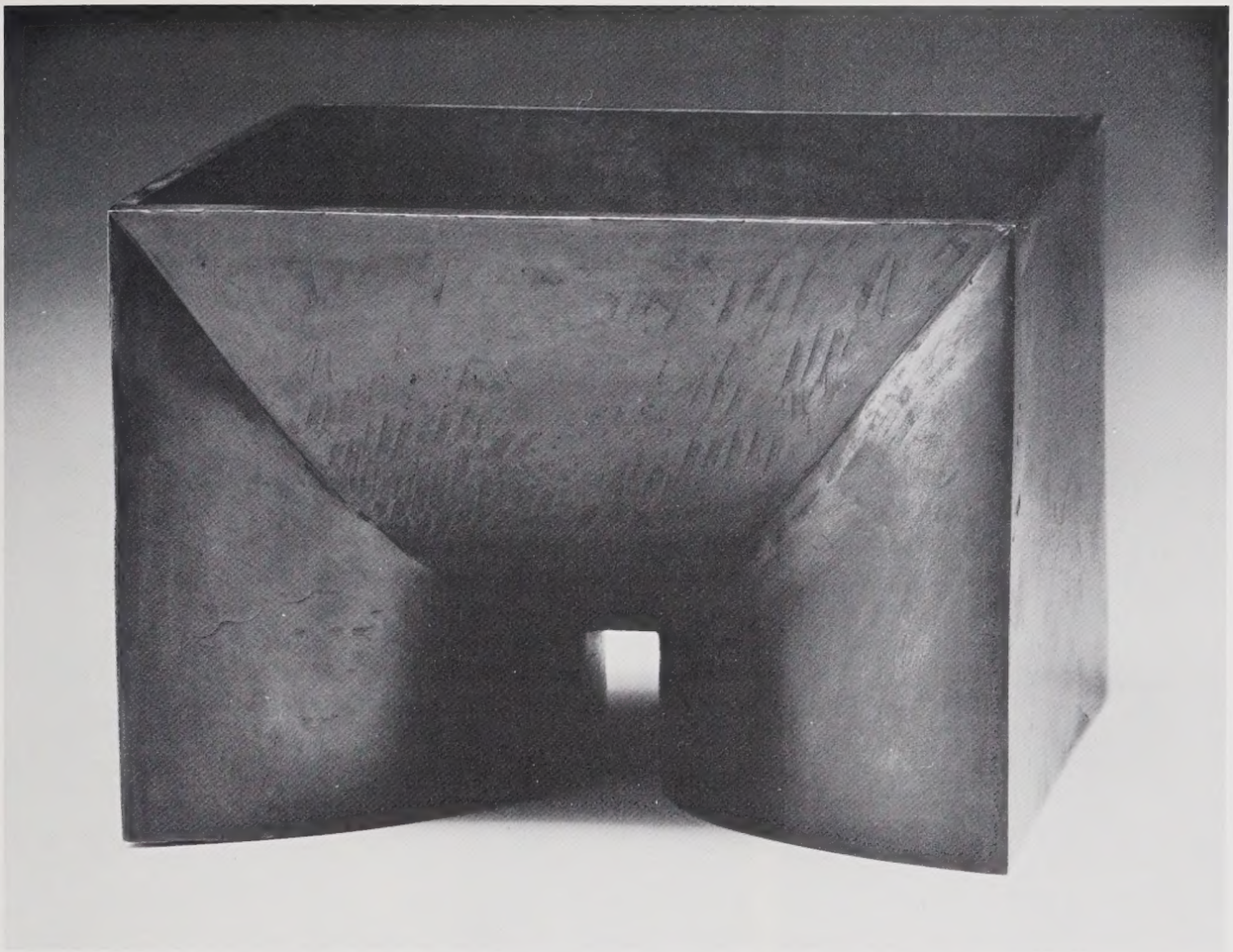
The early work of the 1960s, started at Indiana, is openly expressionistic, mixing silver wire, melted and pitted bronze and brass in sometimes gritty images that suggest intense emotions of confrontation and contact. Loops of wire lengths are twisted, wrapped and soldered straight onto solid and open textured forms that have an *objet trouvé* feeling.

Her 1967 *Wheatfields* necklace is vibrantly alive with its looped and bent silver wires waving in the wind. Another early piece, a pectoral shield with its parallel bronze and brass straight lines soldered to a curving frame, is a feminine protective vestment suggesting the intuitive needs of the inner self protected by rationalist outer behavior, the "thinking woman's" body sculpture.

Another Schick persona slowly emerges from such early work. Her 1980s "stick" designs encompass negative open space defined by slender dowels, cut and riveted to one another in zig-zag, round and pick-up-stick patterns. The Mondrian-like colors of the rods send off the energy of a charged conversational encounter, punctuated with pauses and looks. Wood, a living organic material, becomes a symbolic substitute for the human voice. If art has the power to transform with evocative images, Schick makes a series of witty, and ironic, references between body language versus body "sculpture" with her primary colors and optic impact.

Schick's prodigious, and outrageous, creative energy mock the contemporary American art scene dominated by boutique technology, mass marketing to billionaires and indifference to the human condition.

Lydia Brown Finkelstein writes on art, craft and design from Bloomington, Indiana.



Danu, bronze, 5½ x 7½ x 7¾", 1983
Photo: courtesy Garth Clark Gallery

William Underhill

Garth Clark Gallery, New York City
September 12 – October 7, 1989

by Janet Koplos

What are these bronze forms – vessels, sculpture, architecture, landscape? Their real size limits them to the first or second, but they might imaginatively be the others as well.

Scale is the most obvious of the several difficult issues in the bronzes of William Underhill – issues that reflect irresolution of purpose. Some works seem to cry out for greater dimensions. *Lidded Vessel* consists of two vertical slopes bridged by a plank top, which bloats to a pendulous bottom. One can imagine this in monumental scale, as an industrial retort, a landscape reclamation or an ancient funerary structure. The title, however, squelches such flights of imagination.

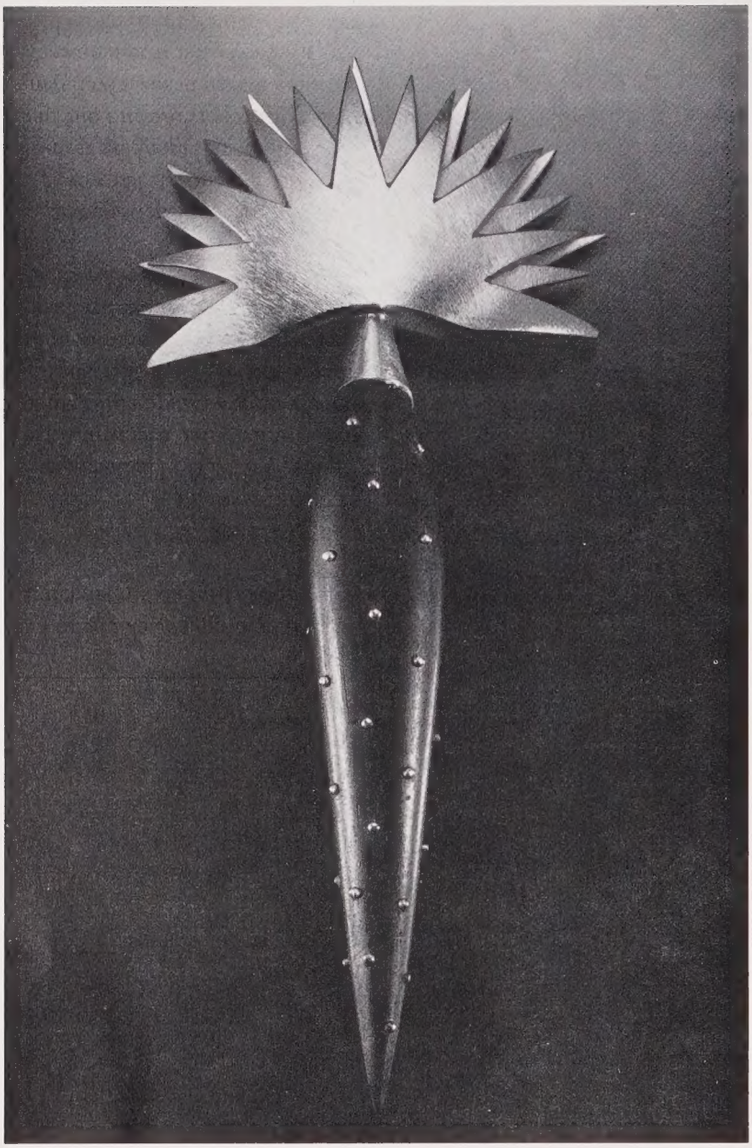
If these are vessels, they are far from ceremonial. Their form (setting aside the question of material) gives them a ponderous weight. They seem not meant to be moved. They sit squat, even when they have legs. They meet the table or pedestal with a thud. One might imagine that a suction seal has formed and they'll be impossible to lift. That's not suitable for a functional vessel, but it's fine for architecture or landscape; the form would seem earthbound, serene, stable and timeless in that context. The bronze material and the various patinations suit those notions, and Underhill sometimes chooses titles that seem equally grounded and aged, such as *Mastaba*.

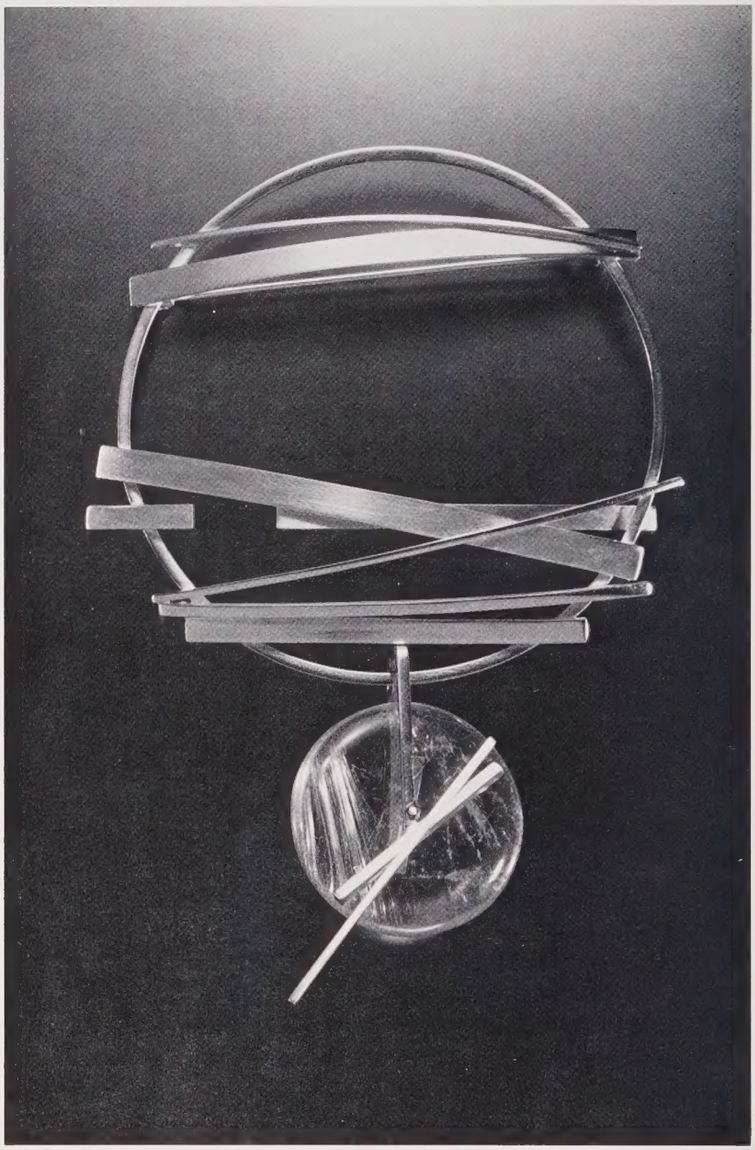
The key to form is geometry, an ancient means of ordering the world. Some chalice or fontlike works are variations of square and cube, with one part or another cut away. These elegant variations are best seen in quantity: one alone looks a little stodgy, but in a group, seen as illustrations of the infiniteness of an abstract concept, they have considerable grace.

Yet Underhill seems to be chafing against the limitations of scale and geometry. Geometry is an abstraction more perfect than nature, yet he makes his bronzes imperfect by alluding to the passage of time. He's not content with austerity, so adds texture to idea. But such alterations are too much like busy-work to have much impact. Underhill's bronzes are intelligent and sensitive, yet they're arbitrary rather than inevitable, made rather than born. His expression of geometric variation, for example, could just as eloquently be realized in a drawing.

But in one work he escapes limitations and slips into the infinite. In *Danu's Sister*, the natural and the abstract are perfectly balanced. Contributing equally are a timeless stillness and a sense that this object is a vessel and more. From the front view, it's a conception of human geometry (as pure as Brancusi's *Torso*). From the top view, it's a square container with an irregular interior. It has the same interaction of curve and line as the others, but it's alive with suggestion, allusion that animates the weight and hardness of the material. Scale is appropriate to the allusion: small enough to be delicate and evocative but large enough to be a generous container, like the female body. It's the achievement of this work that demonstrates the smaller compass of most of the others.

Janet Koplos is a writer specializing in three-dimensional objects.





Art: Jewelry & Metalsmithing

College of Design Gallery, Iowa State University, Ames, IA
September 18 – October 6, 1989

by Jean Sampel

Above left
Susan Amendolara, *Brooch*
ebony, silver

Above right
Melanie Parks, *Brooch*
14k gold, rutilated quartz

Encyclopedic was the thought that lingered after enjoying this extensive exhibit. Organized by Professor Chuck Evans, it showcased the versatility of 42 artists with 142 pieces. Sculpture and holloware dominated, including the monumental strength of Janice Cunningham-Koury's two constructed copper and brass sculptures with brass leaf and patinas and David Pimental's large segmented circular wallpieces, patterned by controlled (resist) patinas. In contrast was *Obi Mock Urn* by Hal Hasselschwert, the most sensitive and gracefully innovative of his seven enamelworks. Also noteworthy was the elegant electroformed and plated bowl by Chunghi Choo, with constructed (and plated) ladle, and the simple but dramatic double-walled cups by Brigid O'Hanrahan. Visions of ceremony surrounded the raised and sculptured copper vessel, enriched with iridescent beads and feathers, by Lisa Kupfer, while the three sleek sterling rattles by Ann Wright seemed destined for royalty. The works of masters Heikki Seppä, Fred Fenster and M. Avigail Upin always invite examination. The wearable art was a media event, with the many materials explored seeming well-suited to the myriad concepts behind the work in this very accomplished collection.

When asked why and how he came to organize such a show, Evans responded that he wanted the residents of the area as well as his students to see a broad spectrum of contemporary metalwork, and the College of Design was willing to finance this idea. Since this invitational exhibition showed metalwork from across the nation, which encompassed practically every technique and material, it was quite interesting to note the absence of any "regional" style or concept, reinforcing the notion that artistic motivation and inspiration are internal, borne of experiences, perspectives, intention, commentary and/or vision, and are not to be categorized by place or process. Evan's past research on his book *Jewelry, Contemporary Design and Technique* made it possible for him to pull this collection together – a virtual primer of excellence for students of the medium.

Jean Sampel is a goldsmith and owner of the Jean Sampel Studio Gallery in Des Moines, IA.

No. 1 Mom
beads, leather,wire, fiber, fabric,1987
Photo: John Dean

Joyce Scott: Beaded Jewelry and Small Sculpture

Susan Cummins Gallery, Mill Valley, CA
January 8 – February 3, 1990

by Roberta Floden

Perhaps because they were so extensively used during the craft heyday of the sixties, beads somehow lack credibility as a serious art medium. Yet, despite such reservations, you can only be delighted at the unpredictable, totally unconventional, bead jewelry and sculpture of Joyce Scott.

There is something subversive, excruciatingly ironic about her art. Using an ancient form of ornamentation, Scott creates bold, oversized jewelry with seductive, jewel-like surfaces that jolt the viewer with their completely nontraditional content. Her pieces are laden with social concerns and issues. The messages may not be hers alone, but surely they are unique in the realm of art jewelry.

For the most part, Scott's work can be considered an ingenious theater of ideas – tense, disconcerting, but not without levity. It has similarities to Pop Art, not only in the use of beads, but in appropriating political and social subject matter, found objects and the immediacy of context. Her work is often peopled with cartoon characters that speak a language imbedded in oppression, racism and feminism. Her narratives use recognizable household imagery to present broad outlines of events, encompassing their causes and consequences. The results are unusual, even absurd, juxtapositions, replete with dimensions that force the viewer to respond intellectually, as well as emotionally and esthetically.

Scott weaves and collages beads, along with fabric, bits of material, photographs and plastic. Her recent *Jonestown Series*, (part of the 1987 Philbrook Museum of Art's "The Eloquent Object" exhibition, shown locally at the Oakland Museum) consists of four brooches commemorating that horrifying tragedy in Guyana. Reflected in her pieces *Kool-Aide Kocktail, For the Souls, The Double Cross* and *The White Boy's Gone Crazy* is her rage at the white spiritual leader, Jim Jones, who ordered his mostly black followers to commit suicide by consuming poisoned drinks. By virtue of this quartet, in which bones, hair, pins, tree bark, stones and a razor are symbolically fashioned to recreate the historical event, Scott has extended the limits to which jewelry can be made forcefully political.

In the current exhibit, Scott has created beaded abstract neckpieces and earrings along with her signature pieces – narrative wearable art and sculpture. Rooted in feminist archetypal themes, these latter pieces are drawn from Scott's deep feelings and trenchant intellect. Here, Scott takes as her subject matter her experience as a woman, asking the (female) wearer/viewer to contemplate her own experiences, as well.

No. 1 Mom is an approximately two-foot tall, three-dimensional sculpture. On a green-beaded kitchen chair, sits Mom, the soul of domesticity. Her naked body is shiny pink leather, her hair blond curly fabric, her beaded face glowing and smiling, while giving birth to one gold-hued beaded baby from a beaded vagina, holding a black one to her nipple, and sitting passively while two others, one red, one brown, climb on her chair.

In *Party w/writing, 1989*, you "read" the oversized necklace, entirely made of beads, from left to right. First comes the word "BEFORE," then the blond head of a man saying "PARTY!" Then, amidst the words "Foxy" and "Get Lucky," come a woman's red dress on a hanger, other party clothes, a shoe, a frontally nude woman with a smile on her face, and then a procession of undergarments – a corset, a slip, pantyhose. Then comes the same blond man's face, only this time smiling as he holds a liquor bottle up to the woman's mouth. The message may be simplistic, but to see it in a collar made up of row upon row of beads is stunning.

A more spiritually conciliatory theme is projected by *Mommy, Mammy with writing & photos, 1989*. It begins with the beaded word "Mommy" and ends with the beaded word "Mammy." Hanging from these words are two black-and-white photos, one of a white and one of a black babydoll encased in plastic and surrounded with beads. Overlaying them is a sculptural figure of the Virgin Mary, with a flat wooden-bead head and a gold crown. In her arms she holds the color photo of a white baby, while a red- and a black-beaded child cling to her gown. When you consider the idea that underpins the collar – we essentially have one mother, we are essentially one people, regardless of the colors and the images we project, thus making the divisions among racial groups arbitrary and without merit – the necklace becomes a charged religious talisman, alive with meaning.

Provocative politics aside, Scott works within a technically fascinating framework. Her subtle sense of color, and her three-dimensional beadwork juxtaposed with flat beadwork, lend these pieces freshness and vitality. It is a jewelry based on compositional and formal elements that uses and manipulates the intrinsic surface reflectivity and opacity of beads. Scott's use of disparate patterns, textures and shapes to form complex visual images stretches the employment of beads to the limit.

None of Scott's neckpieces is quiet. Many are confrontational. There is no understatement here. Some amuse, some annoy, some even shock. You absolutely have to agree with her politics, let alone her style, to consider wearing one of her collars. They may be unconventional in content and high-profile in look, but they involve you in multiple layers of sociological and psychological insights.

Roberta Floden is a Marin County, CA, artist and theater critic.

Left
Ring, 14k yellow gold, chrysoprase

Below
Pendant, sterling silver, 14k gold, citrine, 24mm d.

Clare Yares

Joanne Rapp Gallery / The Hand and the Spirit Gallery, Scottsdale, AZ
November 1 – 30, 1989

by Lynn R. Rigberg

Clare Yares looks for that perfect balance that achieves polarity between the elements of his jewelry; a tension that sparks the work to life. Symmetry and rightness of proportion, usually suggestive of a rather straightforward metallurgic rhetoric, are mysteriously outdistanced.

A circular brooch, just under three inches in diameter, presents a good example. The slightly concave, round, silver shape surrounds a slightly raised, bevel frame. Into this round is set a dish-shaped center of blue enamel. A small gold sphere rests on the silver's raised inner edge, tucked comfortably next to the bevel.

The enamel color is revealed in its graduated intensity as it approaches the center of the concave shape; encased in silver, the heat of the enamel is contained, alive, vibrant. Moreover, the bevel, within which the blue is captured, is itself lined with gold, and so the gold very subtly reflects in the enamel. Thus, the relationship between elements of silver and enamel is imperceptibly, and most effectively, bridged by use of the gold sphere in juxtaposition with the concave enamel. The uncluttered character of design elements in the brooch, says Yares, is a consideration of the fact that "there has to be room for the background, being a brooch."

A concave, silver-hinged bracelet, three-quarters of an inch wide, with fine gold, convex bars set along frequent and equal intervals, is an invitation to participate, to discover, even to explore for tactile interest. The bracelet hinge is operated by a minute flathead pin. The pin is delightfully, confidently responsive to gentle outward pressure that pulls it halfway out, releasing the lower half of the bracelet and allowing it to fall open. "Jewelry," says Yares, "to be appreciated, must be handled."

The bracelet also presents another example of the quality of mystery in Yares's work. The observer has an intuited understanding that the elements of design are somehow perceptively delimiting. Behind that sense is the artist's idea: the arcs of gold, unconsciously continued in the imagination, have their real meeting place at the center of the bracelet.

Yares looks to realize a synergy, a "friendly association between fully evolved elements – including the wearer." A constant force is in action in Yares's pieces. But if the effect is mystical, the power behind it is an apotheosis of intensive intellect, disciplined application, and an inspiration for what Yares understands as "balance that ends up as a state of grace; not just what is but what it does."

Lynn R. Rigberg, who lives in Scottsdale, AZ, writes on the arts and teaches at ASU.

Left: *Great silver chalice from the Derrynaflan, County Tipperary,* hoard, mounted with gold filigree panels, amber, Irish, early 9th century. Collection: National Museum of Ireland. Photo: courtesy British Museum, London

Below: *Annular brooch from Hunterston, West Kilbride, Ayrshire,* silver, gold, amber, hoop 12.2 cm d., Irish or Irish-type, late 7th - early 8th century; Scandinavian 10th-century runes. Collection: National Museum of Scotland Photo: courtesy British Museum, London

The Work of Angels

Masterpieces of Celtic Metalwork, 6th – 9th centuries A.D.
British Museum, London
November 29, 1989 – April 29, 1990

by Deborah Norton

"The Work of Angels," an expression first used by Gerald the Welshman in the 12th century to describe a Celtic illuminated manuscript, was chosen as the title for this exhibition because it applies equally well to this outstanding collection of jewelry and religious objects. There is also evidence that decoration for these ancient books was derived from fine metalwork, thus making the title doubly appropriate.

Although made on an island on the western tip of Europe, this work was not produced in isolation, as the Irish Sea enabled easy contact between Ireland and Britain. Traditional Celtic metalworking techniques and styles were augmented by outside influences that resulted from trade and travel. From the sixth century, Irish missionaries traveled abroad to France, Switzerland, Rome and the Holy Land, while Anglo-Saxons and Franks were known to have visited Ireland.

Jewelry played a significant role in Irish society during this period. Brooches were universally worn – by men on their shoulders and by women on their breasts – and the possession of fine jewelry and metal objects was a mark of status and success. An eighth-century Irish tract on status specifies the fine metals and inlays appropriate for kings.

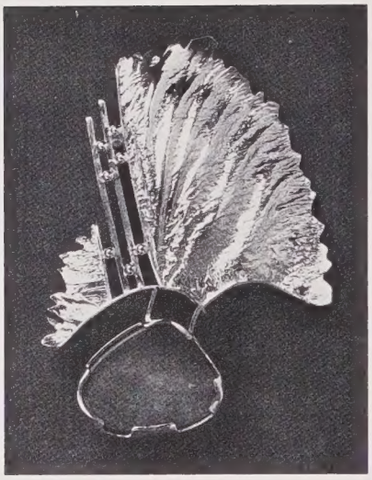
The Hunterston brooch, made in the late seventh or early eighth century, is an extremely fine example of the ultimate status symbol. Made of gilded silver (a very valuable material at this time, as there was no regular supply of precious metals available in Ireland and only one solid gold brooch is known to exist), it was cast in a two-piece mold rather than the lost-wax process popular two centuries earlier. Its form is the traditional penannular ring with triangular terminals, but the usual gap at the bottom is filled by a decorative panel. The filigree on each of the panels depicts interlaced beasts executed in beaded wire (a handmade wire was hammered along its length between dies to produce a beading effect) and filled with gold granulation. The bird heads clinging to the outer edge of the ring are derived from Anglo-Saxon jewelry as is the exceptionally crisp filigree. Like other brooches of this era, the reverse side is decorated with the same motifs, techniques and level of complexity as the front. The lack of gemstones in the Celtic world is compensated for in this piece by the use of amber. In other objects, enamel and glass inlay, especially millefiori, was used to achieve the polychrome effect that revolutionized Celtic metalwork in the seventh century.

When Christianity was introduced to Ireland in the fifth century, the techniques and motifs of secular metalwork were employed for ecclesiastical objects. Like the Hunterston brooch, the Derrynaflan chalice uses amber and filigree, but in this piece, made a century later, the animals are more naturalistic. Each panel contains a single beast, often a griffin, that is an elegant sketch rather than a curvilinear design as in the earlier brooch. Like all large and complex objects made at this time, this chalice was created in small segments that were later assembled using riveting as the main joining technique.

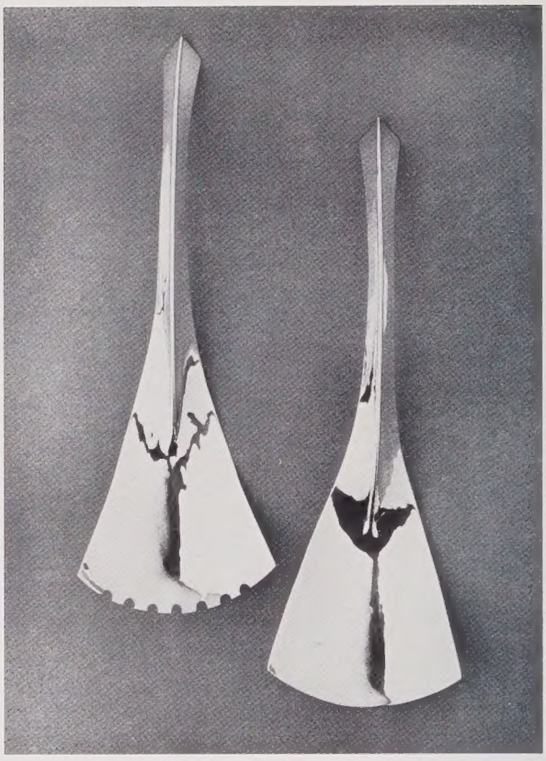
This exhibition concluded with an intriguing display of tools, molds, crucibles and even "sketch books" (designs incised on stone) that gave valuable insight into the fabrication process.

A scholarly catalog with color photos is available for £12.95 from the British Museum, Great Russell St., London WC1, England.

Deborah Norton is a contributing editor to Metalsmith *living in London.*



Marie Susinno
Summer at the Beach pin,
reticulated silver,
boulder opal, constructed,
2⅓ x 1¾"



The Fifth Juried Biennial Exhibition, Washington Guild of Goldsmiths

Partners Gallery, Bethesda, MD
December 1, 1989 – January 1990

by Lenore D. Miller

Yvonne Arritt, *Pasta Serving Set*, sterling silver, gold-forged, formed, 12 x 3¾ x 1¼"

Since 1978, the Washington Guild of Goldsmiths has enabled a group of dedicated men and women, who share a passionate interest in metalsmithing and jewelry design, to network, exhibit and learn more about their craft. "Metalwork '89" is their fifth biennial, featuring jewelry, sculpture and holloware. Juror Alan Revere's statement notes the tough decisions he faced in selecting from many worthwhile entries. Excellence in the areas of design impact, originality and craftsmanship were cited. The 10 award winners were selected by Rosanne Raab on the basis of creative expression and fine craftsmanship. Her catalog statement raised the question of the paucity of vessels, flatware and the limited use of precious metals. Although wearable jewelry such as pins and necklaces predominated, there were a number of functional and decorative statements, including a lamp.

The juxtaposition of unlikely textures and the incorporation of materials usually associated with more mundane or industrial usages seem to be trends in contemporary ornament. Gretchen Raber, a pioneer in this idiom, is but one of the artists whose inspirational designs come from mechanical tools and space-age materials. Eric Margry's rings poetically unite opposites – rubber, gold and diamonds – with a modernistic flair. Streamlined design in the constructed brooch by Janet C. Peters recalls the Art Deco era.

Educational workshops sponsored by the Guild throughout the year explore technical and esthetic aspects of metalwork. The impact of these workshops was reflected in Mildred M. Ehrlich's granulated earrings and in Fred Fenster's columnar pewter candlesticks.

Several functional pieces were exceptional for their quality of design. Yvonne Arritt's pasta serving set of fold-forged and formed sterling silver were most impressive for their timeless design quality derived from the seamless confluence of material and form. Betty Helen Longhi's letter opener recalled the organic, flowing line of Art Nouveau. Likewise, Joan F. Levy's *Fan 1* pendant mixed materials with an eye for linear grace and decorative enrichment. Allowing the materials to speak eloquently, Fridl Blumenthal's sculpted spiral, forged and fabricated, set off an unusual free-form rutilated quartz.

Other pieces in the show evoked the mystery of organic growth patterns and alluded to the romance of landscape. Marie H. Susinno's *Summer at the Beach* reticulated silver pin, which exquisitely balanced the color and shape of an opal with a crested form like a wave, evoked the joyous feeling of floating on the sea. Patricia M. Perito's *Watermelon Slice* pin similarly shared an ability to elicit an emotional response through whimsy and simplicity of form. Susan Portner's unique approach to carved onyx invested simple designs with great elegance. Eun-Mee Chung's brooch *Through the Flower #4 Fence* exhibited complex spatial and textural manipulations more commonly associated with mixed-media painting.

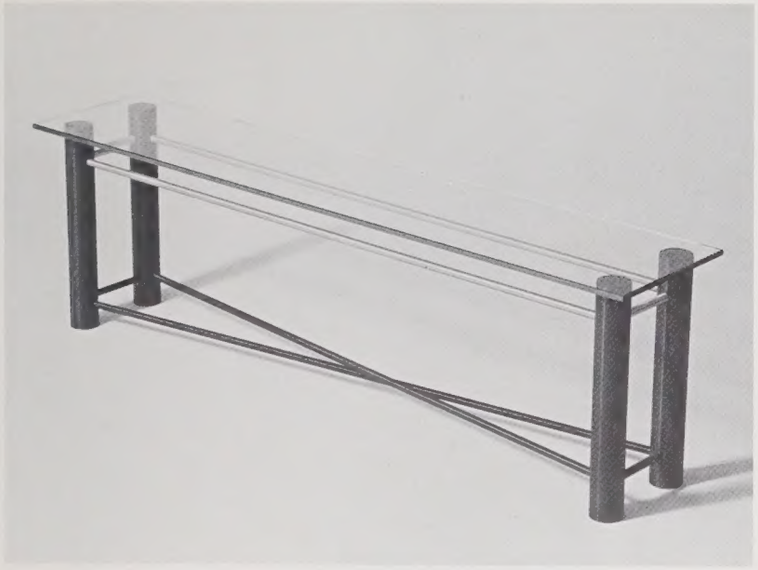
The inspirational role of tribal art on jewelry design was evident in Roger Kuhn's African brass goldweights mounted in textured copper. These solid looking pins have titles that reflect an interest in archaeological layering. Another piece that exhibited a tectonic dynamism was the isosceles-shaped pin by Seymour Jeffery.

Komelia H. Okim's influence on younger designers has produced some strong work. Her excellent craftsmanship was represented in this show by containers and vessels that exhibited great stylization and wit. Another interesting trend was the use of metals as if they were decorative gemstones. Works by Rosemary Gould/Tom Dulz and Sheila Marshall fell into this category.

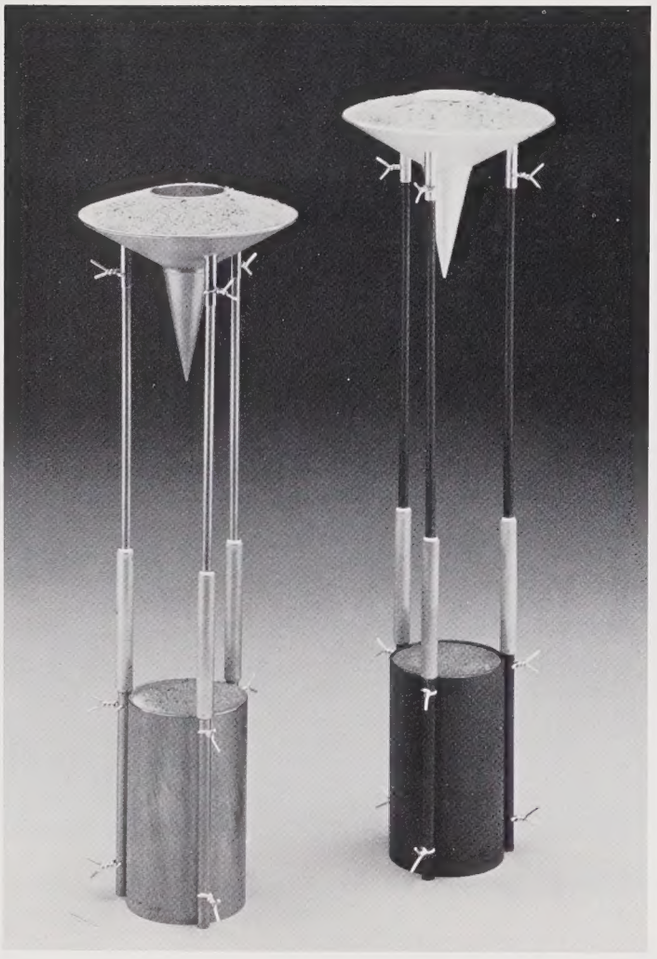
Keith Lewis's captivating character studies make one forget all about arbitrary distinctions among the fine arts. The power of this artist's work lies in his ability to achieve the "alchemy" of bringing inert matter to life. Movement and whimsical gesture unite in his excellently crafted metal brooches to produce a unique statement. The details lavished on his pieces, such as the cleverly shaped fasteners and private messages, which can only be seen by the wearer, offered an endearing originality. *Dancing Male Nude*, of sterling silver, brass and depletion silvering, epitomized an expressive though minimal gesture.

The tour-de-force carousel by Michael R. Schwartz ushered the viewer into the realm of fantasy and pushed figuration, romance and animation to its decorative limits. The animated, lighted and musical mixed media piece mimicked sculptural monumentality, despite its appearance as an extravagant toy for the romantic soul.

Lenore Miller is an artist, lecturer and curator of art at The Dimock Gallery, Washington, D.C.



Lorelei Hamm, *Callisto table,* anodized aluminum, plate glass, 14 x 48 x 10"



Boris Bally, *Tri-Rod Candle Sculptures,* goldplate, oxydized brass, silverplate, aluminum, silver wire, concrete, each 3 x 3 x 11", 1988. Photo: Powell Photography

Short Runs

MOTTO, M D F, Cambridge, MA

by Daniel Jocz

A new phenomenon: artists who traditionally make jewelry are designing tabletop accessories and small furniture in short-run production. I became aware of this recently, at the opening of two new stores: Motto and M D F, featuring furniture and accessories, both owned and run by Jude Silver. Many of the works in both stores are done by the same artists. Silver's knack for presentation lends an aura of excitement as her passion for metal construction and related techniques sets the tone, while her love of Deco sets the general style of work presented.

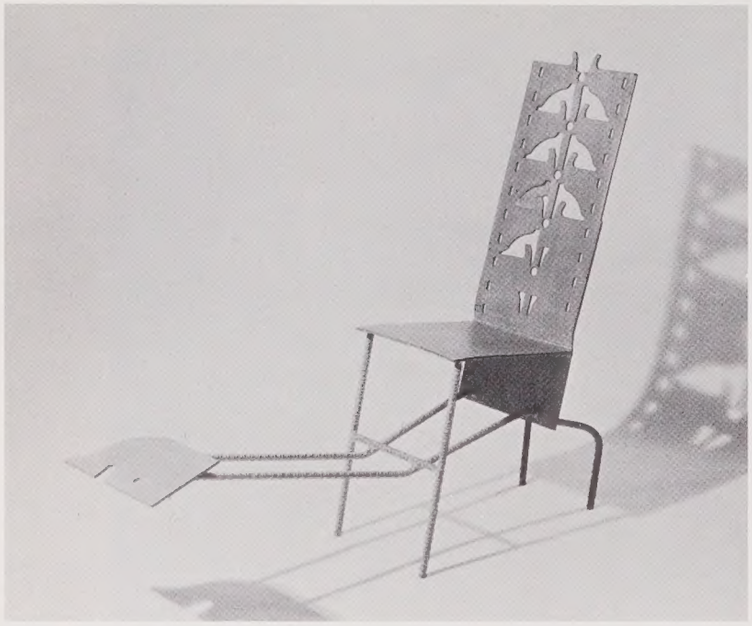
Kirsten Hallthorn's earrings and brooches tend towards simple, pleasing comparisons between materials, shapes and textures, and through the use of imaginative associations, she generates visual interest. This free-association approach translates to her tabletop accessories as well. Cleverly using rivets and rings to connect acrylic and metals, she plays one material off the other. For example, the more massive, bouncy, tubular-rubber base for an acrylic bowl seems just right when compared to the detailing of the riveted handles. A sense of fun prevails throughout her work. The growth metaphor and the imposed versus natural phenomenon of textures and shapes that she uses so well work better in the simpler pieces. This discrepancy may be due to her wish to keep a look of individuality and the mark of the handmade in a production situation.

Though Boris Bally's work resides on the borderline between straight-forward design and exploratory craft persuasion, the sense of use in his work is requisite. His candleholders, corkscrews and flatware have an inventive edge. While his feel for engineered design comes through in his jewelry, it is particularly evident in his blending of art and usefulness in corkscrews and candleholders. Though many of the flatware and sterling silver candleholders are driven by a functional schema, others, such as his sterling, aluminum and concrete candleholders, transcend everyday usefulness. It is the symbolism – hand holding a disk, ring with ball hanging in the center of the candleholders – that adds a twist and suggests a higher aim. An enigmatic quality drives one to contemplate these objects. Candleholders constructed from sterling, anodized aluminum and concrete have wire twist fasteners, a touch of overt handwork to complement the machined formalist look of the holder itself. The use of concrete in the base and top gives the holders weight, both literally and visually. While his stacked, modular, sterling silver candleholders with their calculated sense of elegance readily imply a design for a production, they do not have the impact of the other candleholders. The repetitive silver forms lend themselves to production but lose the sense of daring evident in his other work.

Lorili Hamm makes sterling silver, acrylic brooches with subtle scratched finishes and heat-generated colorations. With these brooches, constructed of superimposed shapes with cutouts, she develops a sense of quiet and mystery. Using rivet fastening to her advantage, she creates an esthetic counterpoint. Hamm's venture into the world of small furniture and tabletop accessories design has mixed results. Her *Callisto* table is direct constructivism, bold in concept. Structural connections are direct, adding power through simplicity in construction. The glass top and the anodized aluminum tubular legs of this table have commensurate purpose. This directness of construction runs through Hamm's furniture and accessories. Forms that don't have a structural role in her mirrors and frames such as cones and pyramids, tend to confuse; are they fantasy elements or just post-modern? The use of these puzzling elements obscures the real strength in the works. One hopes that the bold strokes seen in Hamm's pedestals and tables win out.

Individual pieces stand out among the work of Bally, Hallthorn and Hamm, as well as other jewelry artists who are exponents of this designer trend, but there is a struggle between a craft "hands-on-approach" and a design for production method.

Daniel Jocz is a metalsmith/jeweler living in Boston.

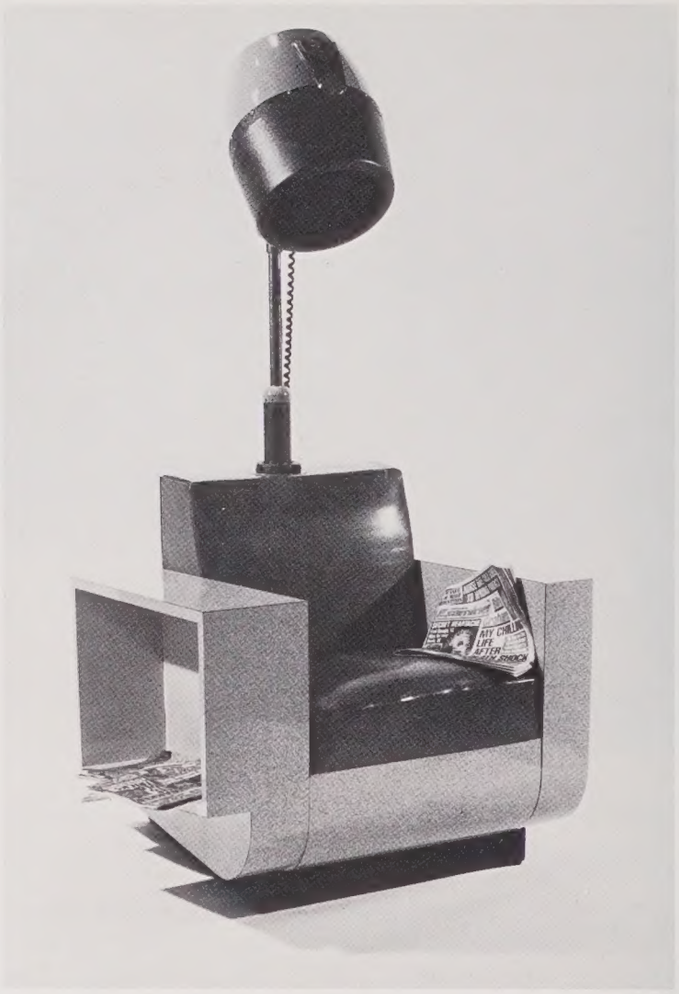


Scott Brazeau, *Work Chair*, steel

The Artful Chair

Target Gallery, The Torpedo Factory Art Center, Alexandria, VA
January 21 – March 11, 1990

by Jan Maddox



Eric Margry, *Gossip Information Chair*, found objects, Formica, vinyl

This exhibition was one of a series planned to encourage artists to use a functional object as a means for esthetic expression. Twenty-two artist, both juried and invited, were selected by curator Dickson Carroll. The most cautious examples were made by several furnituremakers, functional and well designed. In a few cases, the function seemed incidental and the artists simply used a chair instead of a canvas as a basis for painting, collage or assemblage. Other pieces more fully explored the possibilities of making an esthetic statement within the restrictions of the given function. The distinction between the two approaches at first seems to be one of emphasis, but to fulfill the declared intent of the show, it had to be fundamental.

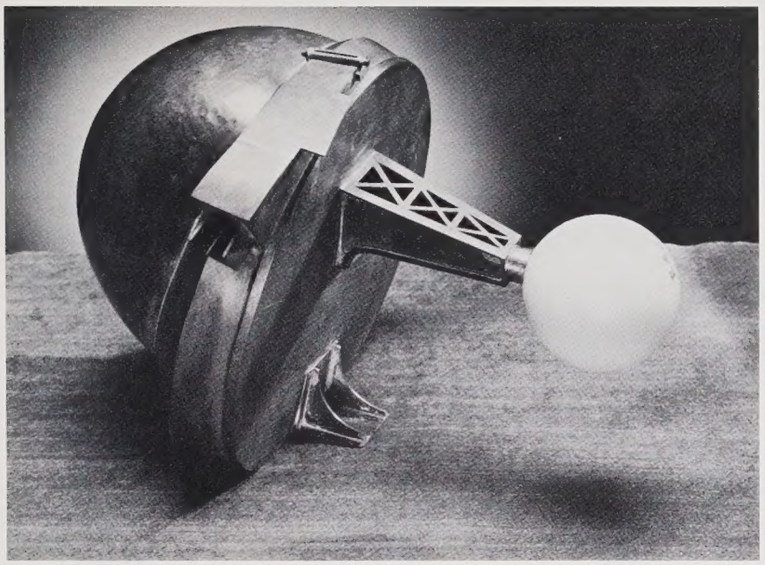
Animus by Donna Reinsel used a welded reinforcing rod framework and pieces of sheepskin with a long columnar spine topped by a sheeplike head. It seemed anachronistic, a throw-back to primitive form, with a sense of personality and reality resulting from its deliberately crude construction and contrast to the "nicer" pieces around it. *Work Chair* by Scott Brazeau also used reinforcing rods, "found steel," but with very different results. Playing with a series of interesting cut-outs that explored positive/negative shape interaction and the progressive development of the shapes, it was perhaps the most purely sculptural of the pieces, and one had no urge whatsoever to sit on it. *Wing Chair* by Robin Youngelman was symmetrically constructed from a series of interlocking arcs of welded steel sheet. Despite the cold, hard material, the chair looked functional and even comfortable. The two pieces by F.L. Wall were very cool, simple, geometric shapes, but with an unexpected element such as a bone for the back or pitchfork tines to add to an element of surprise.

Among the more amusing pieces were two artists looking at the 50s. Shag Herndon's *'49 Ford Auto Sofa* was the rear end of a 1949 Ford, with an upholstered seat of shiny red vinyl inserted where the trunk had been. Eric Margry took an old hair dryer, dressed it up with new paint, added a brand new square chair of bright pink formica with little turquoise kidney line drawings and a red vinyl seat and changed it into a lamp. Copies of the *National Enquirer*, etc., provided the proper ambience for his *Gossip Information Chair*. Totally, tastefully, tacky.

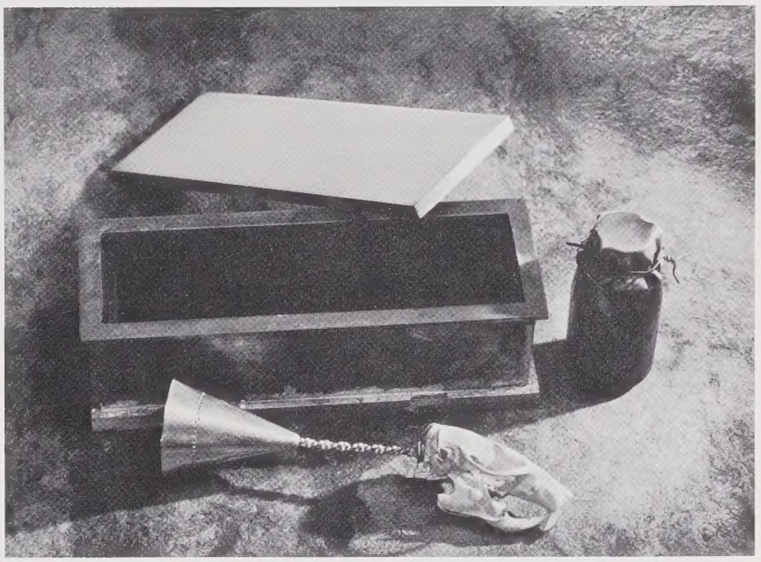
There were relatively few examples of jewelry. Linda Hesh's earrings, *Sitting Pretty*, were whimsical and wearable. Gretchen Raber constructed a one-quarter-sized maquette for a dining chair that is a variation of one of her brooches in material, color and design. As a long-time admirer of her work, I enjoyed watching a brooch become an upholstered chair as she adjusted her design ideas to deal with the change in function. Thomas Mann was represented by *Techno-Throne*, a piece that was also closely related to his jewelry. The missile enthroned on the chair makes a strong comment about the influence of the military-industrial complex in our society.

I came away wishing that more of the artists had explored truly outrageous ideas or tried to change my attitude about "the chair" as an ordinary functional object. You can always second guess a curator, and I have since seen several chairs that might have made the exhibition more exciting and innovative. Although the show may not have explored the expressive potential of the chair as fully as one might have wished, it certainly was a worthwhile starting point.

Jan Maddox is a metalsmith living in Bethesda, MD.



Teapot, copper, raised, constructed, field hockey ball handle, 8 x 9 x 14", 1990
Photo: Nash Studio



Euthanasia Set, sterling cup, rat skull brass and copper reliquary bottle with lead cover, 2 x 2 x 6". Photo: Nash Studio

Curtis LaFollette: Recent Works

Bannister Gallery, Rhode Island College, Providence, RI
February 1 – 22, 1990

by Daniel Jocz

This show chronicles a year of transition in LaFollette's holloware. It begins with somewhat traditional geometric teapots, progresses through a macabre series of *Euthanasia* cups and ends with miniaturized teapot forms that are deconstructed, architectonic and combined with actual industrial objects. Throughout his work, we see a balancing act calculated to keep us in a state of anxious uncertainty. This is apparent when he is having fun with a teapot handle versus a teapot body in the early work, as well as when he later juxtaposes architectural, organic and found objects (i.e. a Briggs muffler and a field hockey ball) in the potent industrial teapots. It is clear that he is interested in exploring larger issues, but he is also dedicated to the teapot with its implied ceremonies that give weight to the artistic concerns. While the teapot itself gets deconstructed as his work progresses, it always retains a sense of real function (one does want to pick up and pour with it).

The 1988 sterling silver teapot that doesn't breach established conventions is an elegant example of applied geometry without extraneous design elements. The spout and lid contribute to a nice balance between the hammered-finish silver body and the bloodwood and silver handle that frames the pot.

The exquisite mushroom container produced near the end of LaFollette's *Euthanasia* series holds a fascinating irony. We know the shapes and colors foretell doom. They are all there; but though it is a straightforward metaphor for the atom bomb, it is ironically an esthetic container. A low, hooded, cone-shaped main body has a flat, purple-red patina; the color is neither cool nor warm. The highly polished cover rises from the base into a mushroom shape; copper at the bottom, it rises to silver and brass, married metal at the top. It is this married metal combination that suggests white heat. The effect is arresting. What makes the irony work is LaFollette's restrained narrative against a strong container esthetic. We are struck by its beauty and horrified by its subject. He has created a perfect metaphor for our fascination with the power of the bomb and simultaneous horror of its destructive power. This schema of repelling/compelling also is apparent in the *Euthanasia* cups; vertebrae seem paradoxically tragic and beautiful as bases for the elegantly formed copper bowls. Other pieces in the *Euthanasia* series tip the balance toward the morbid and are clues to the strong ironic imagery in his later work.

The 1990 teapot with field hockey ball signals LaFollette's current direction. The teapot, at this point, has been deconstructed and transformed into an improvisation of disparate parts. Using the containment/growth/tension inherent in organic forms as the theme of the body, he applies a swirling line around the pot, ending in an industrially derived spout. One side of the pot is cut off and a miniature, mufflerlike, truss-fragment attached. A field hockey ball – the teapot handle – attached to this strut acts as a compositional foil. The industrial effect is enhanced by the tarnished steel-wooled finish. LaFollette's witty improvisation the muffler and hockey ball assemblages adds a note of droll humor to the otherwise melancholy field of teapot forms in metalsmithing.

Daniel Jocz is a metalsmith/jeweler living in Boston.

Letters

Dear Editor:

On April 4, 1990, the National Campaign for Freedom of Expression was launched in Washington, D.C. The organization is a coalition of artists and arts advocates formed to lobby for support of the National Endowment for the Arts and influence congressional policy on freedom of expression. A national foundation has promised to pay the full-time salary of a director for NCFE and the organization is hiring a political strategist to assist. To my knowledge, individual artists have never had a lobbying committee to work on their behalf, which is what makes this development so important for all of us and for SNAG.

As there is well-organized opposition to the continued funding of the National Endowment for the Arts (one key Republican NEA supporter Iowa Representative Fred Grandy reports his mail is running 25 – 1 against the NEA), is it imperative that we join forces with other artists and arts organizations to support this effort.

The Preamble for NCFE states:

The National Campaign for Freedom of Expression is a coalition of concerned artists, individuals and organizations who believe in the inalienable rights of artists to freedom of expression. We maintain that the creation and presentation of art must be protected as a fundamental human right essential to a free and equitable society. We advocate the public's right of access to the entire spectrum of artistic expression. We are not a homogeneous culture; we are a diverse culture made rich by many different kinds of voices and traditions. Our society must continue to freely and fully support religious, ethnic, racial, sexual and regional diversity without any form of censorship.

The Mission for NCFE states:

To protect and celebrate freedom and diversity of expression for artists and audiences in the United States of America. Through this effort, to strengthen our diverse and multicultural society. To positively and significantly change national cultural policy.

The Goals for NCFE state:

1. To protect the First Amendment rights of artists and audiences in every community.
2. To fight against censorship throughout the United States.
3. To promote the political empowerment of artists.
4. To maximize legislative support.
5. To elect supporters to Congress and defeat opponents of freedom of expression.
6. To form alliances on this issue within and outside the arts.
7. To increase public understanding, not only of the fundamental role that freedom of expression plays in our society, but also of the danger inherent in censorship, in both general and specific instances.
8. To increase funding for the arts from all sectors.

I believe that each individual member of SNAG should make his/her voice heard by joining NCFE. Recommended membership rates are $15, but the organization needs us to be as generous as possible. Make checks payable to: NCFE, P.O. Box 50245, F Street Station 230, Washington, D.C., 20004. For information call: (202) 393-ARTS. We cannot put this off a moment; NEA hearings are under way. Send your check the minute you read this letter, *please.*

SNAG and all of the arts community have benefitted and been given the support of the NEA. It is time for us to show our support to ensure the future of arts funding and our rights of expression. *Please act now !*

Jan Brooks Loyd
Newell, NC

Dear Editor:

Addison Parks' article "Louis Mueller; Synergistic Games" angers me! Mr. Parks must think he can seduce us with flowery words which lack validity or concrete evidence of what Mr. Mueller is trying to express with this most recent body of work. It is nothing more than Parks' assumptions, contradictions and blatant sales pitch. I'm amazed Mr. Mueller has nothing other than "anticipation" to say, thus leaving the rest to Parks. Indeed, Mueller lets this void piece of script represent him both in the primary metals publication of the country as well as in his exhibition catalog. Without statements directly from Mr. Mueller, I know nothing more about him than I did before this article, and I find that unfortunate. Instead, I've been subjected to phrases like: "Contradiction is the source of this work's quiet and satisfying strength..." and "Louis Mueller's work is finally about itself." I'm insulted that you expect me to absorb this literary farce and, in my opinion, it would be better suited for *Good Housekeeping*!

Sharon C. Seggi
Tempe, AZ

Dear Editor:

As a follow-up to my letter in the Spring issue of *Metalsmith,* I am pleased to note the following dispatch from *Time-Out* magazine of March 21–28: "There is some good news. Much to its relief the Crafts Council is not to merge with the Arts Council, and can go ahead with plans for a new London centre which will include a large craft gallery, a book shop and a possible retail area – a 'hands on' approach very different to that of the Arts Council. Experimental and avant-garde film-making will be in the hands of the British Film Institute, and its director Wilf Stephenson has given a firm commitment to 'preserve this well established tradition, and maintain accessibility for film-makers'. Timothy Mason, the generally respected Director of the Scottish Arts Council, is to oversee the changes."

Deborah Norton
London

Dear Editor:

I just received the current dynamite issue of *Metalsmith.* The cover is beautiful and the article on Jamie Bennett is fine. Since the time when I had him give a workshop at CCAC, I have been aware that he is one of the few craftsmen whose work reflects the painterly image. His current work bears this out.

Florence Resnikoff
Oakland, CA

Dear Editor:

I really enjoyed your editorial in the last issue. It is exactly this kind of thoughtful and challenging writing that really makes *Metalsmith* one of the most insightful and interesting art publications coming out today.

Mija Riedel
Susan Cummins Gallery
Mill Valley, CA

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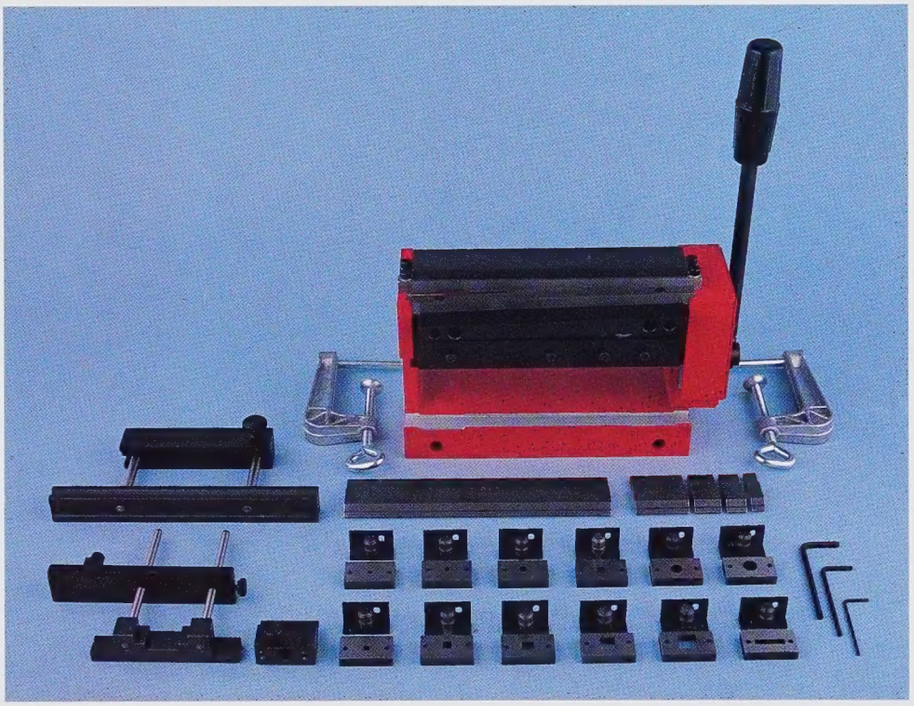

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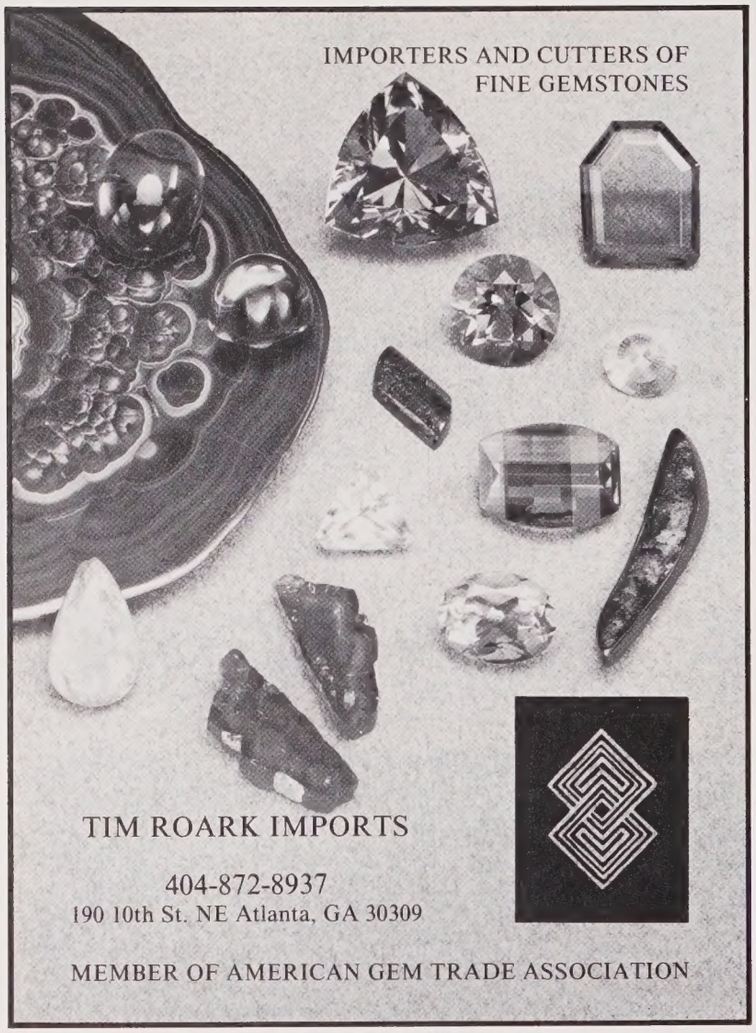

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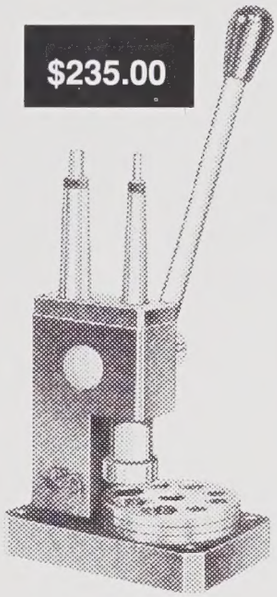

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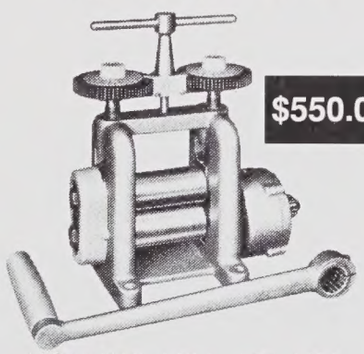

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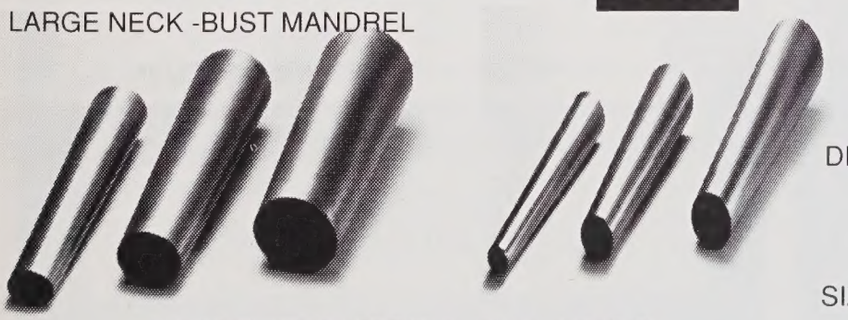

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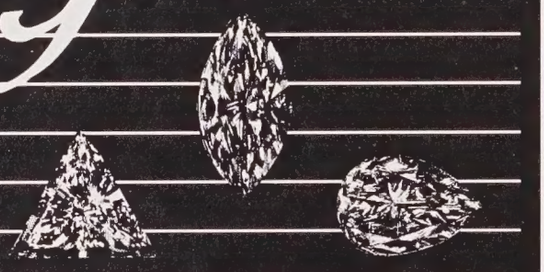

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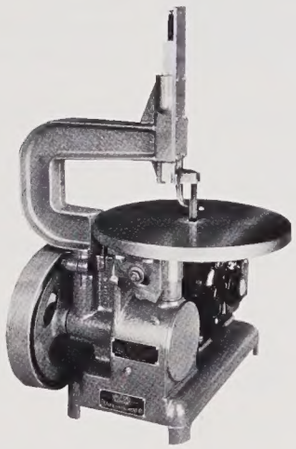

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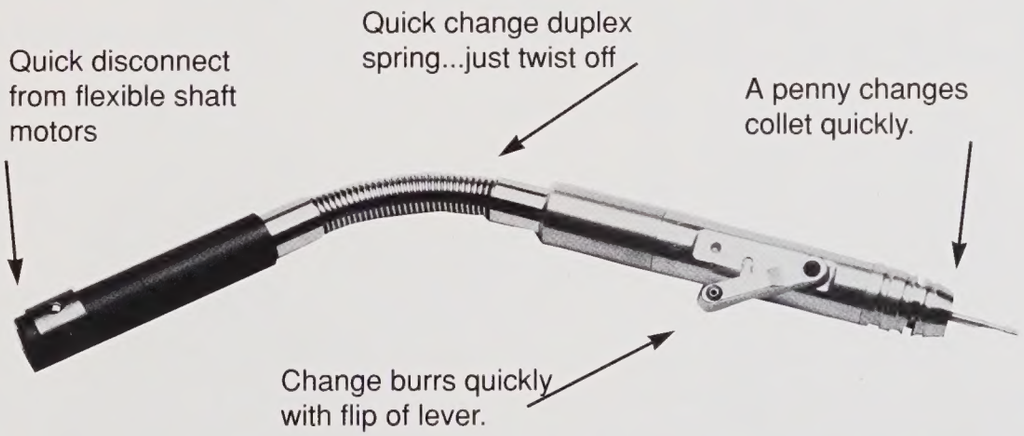
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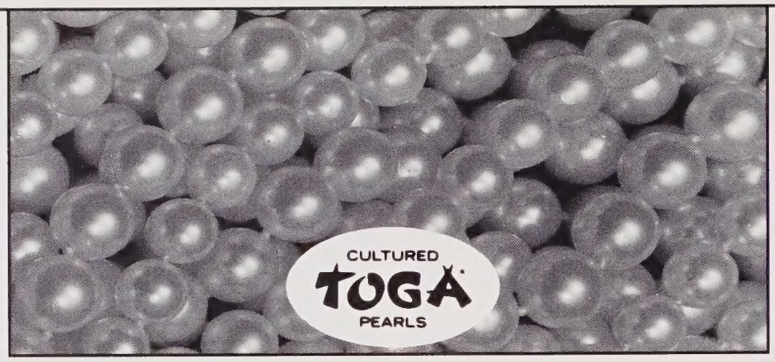

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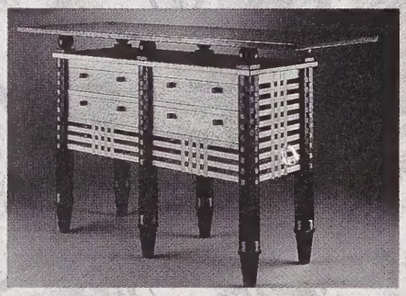

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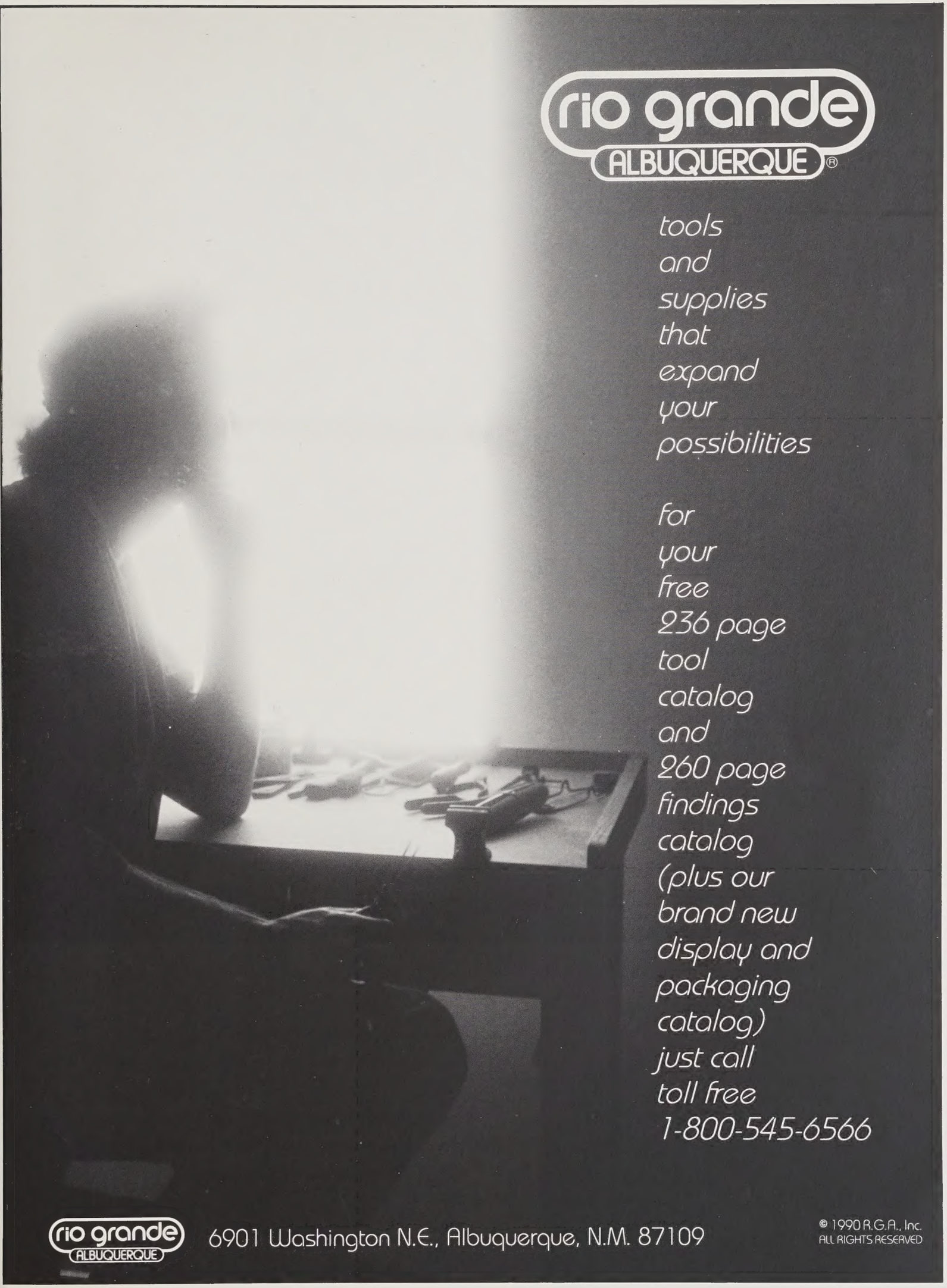
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